

A GUIDE TO TAKING ACTION AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

Elected officials hold public meetings to hear from members of their community about the issues that matter most to them. Attending an event like this gives you an opportunity to ask questions of your lawmakers regarding issue areas that interest you.

Why is attending a third house meeting an effective tactic?

- **It's an opportunity to speak directly to elected officials about your concerns.** You can share your personal story, bring up issues in your community, provide a brief background of your issue and ask a question of your elected official in front of a large crowd.
- **You can recruit or join forces with others on your advocacy efforts.** At the meeting, there will be others from your community who care enough about issues facing the community to take time to hear from elected officials - this makes these meetings a great opportunity to meet other activists in your area.
- **Find an upcoming town hall event to attend at:**
www.aclu-in.org/en/third-house-meetings

Tips before attending:

- **Find out what's on the agenda.** For public meetings, you can likely find the agenda online. If you can't, call the office organizing the meeting and ask for a copy. You should also find out if there will be time for members of the public to speak, and if so, what you have to do to sign up to offer public comment.
- **Be sure to prepare your questions.** Focus on your elected officials record or statements they've made regarding the issue. If you have a personal connection to the issue, be sure to briefly share your personal story. Write down your questions so you are prepared.
- **Be aware of time limits.** Many meetings may have a time limit for each comment. If this is the case, practice your comment to ensure you are concise and within the time limit.
- **Arrive early and sign up to speak.** If you have invited people to participate, greet them as they arrive. Explain what they need to do to sign up to speak and help them get on the list.
- **Be visible.** This could mean bringing signs, wearing the same color or wearing buttons – anything that makes it clear who in the crowd is there for the same reason. Make sure to check with the organization hosting to see if there are restrictions on signs.
- **Stay on message.** If you've recruited others to join your efforts, make sure to distribute talking points to all the activists at the meeting so that everyone's comments are concise and factually accurate. Remember that you **aren't speaking on behalf of the ACLU**, but you are representing yourself, your community and our cause.
- **Be courteous, yet direct.** Conduct yourself in a way that is consistent with the seriousness of civil liberty issues. If your elected officials say something outrageous or offensive, speak truth to power and let them know you disagree.

Plan on attending a meeting? Let us know by sending an email to volunteer@aclu-in.org. We'll send you more tools for you and your community and keep you updated on ACLU issue areas and the landscape in our state.

ACLU
Indiana