



# PROVIDING PUBLIC COMMENT AT A PUBLIC MEETING

Local councils and boards are increasingly the forum where critical civil liberties issues are addressed. A crucial tool for making your opinion known as a member of the community at meetings of these local entities is through public comment. Here are some tips on addressing a public meeting.

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## Before you go to the meeting:

- Find out what's on the agenda. For public meetings, you should be able to find the agenda online.
- Confirm there is a time for public comment and what is required to sign up.
- Arrive early, complete any process for making comment and be prepared to speak.
- If you are part of a group taking a position on a local issue, 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.
- If you are planning to bring signs, check to see if they are permitted inside the meeting room or council chambers.

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## Tips for public comment:

- Keep your public comments brief to 2-3 minutes, or shorter if time is limited.
- Try to be clear and concise in the message you want to convey.
- Be courteous, yet direct toward the council members. Address your remarks to the board or council members, not to the audience, and do not respond to provocative remarks made by others.
- Highlight your support or opposition in a clear, direct way. Don't try to list multiple issues the council should address.

### Part 1: Introduce yourself and the issue you want to make a public comment about

- Give your first and last name and share some information about your connection to the community and/or issue being discussed.
  - Ex. "My name is Jane Doe and I am a concerned resident of this town/a parent of children in the school district/expert on this issue."
- Tell them what issue you are addressing, and your position.
  - Ex. "I am speaking today in opposition to the proposed ban", "I am speaking today in support the council approving this measure."

### Part 2: Explain why you felt the need to make a public comment

- Tell how this impacted you, your family or members of your community.
- Share a personal narrative if appropriate and you are able to share it in public.
- Explain why the board or council's actions might harm or improve the community.

### Part 3: Close and thank the Councilmembers

- Reiterate the action you hope the council takes.
  - Ex. "Please vote in opposition to this measure", "Please support this measure when it comes to a vote."
- Thank the members for listening to your public comment.
  - Ex. "Thank you for your time", "Thank you for hearing my comment today."