

Dear Humane Activist Network Leaders:

I hope you all are doing well. As many state legislative sessions will be getting under way, I just wanted to remind you of some tips on testifying if and when you testify during a hearing for a state bill affecting animals. I know not all of you are planning on testifying in the upcoming session, but a great many of you will so I thought a reminder of these tips might be helpful. By the way, you can find these tips in the Grassroots Activism section of your HAN "tool kit" binder.

For those of you who have never attended a hearing, I would definitely recommend attending one. You will get a hands-on perspective on how the state legislative process works and get to see our friends and foes in action. Plus your presence alone will show legislators that there is support for the animals! And if you feel comfortable, you can even testify. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding testifying. Someone in your HSUS regional office can also assist you.

Before I get to the tips though, I want to address a point about business cards. A number of you have asked me if you can have business cards with your title as state coordinator or district captain. I think it is fine to have cards as long as they say that you are a state coordinator or district captain of the Humane Activist Network and NOT of HSUS. When you testify you can also mention your title and the Humane Activist Network, but please DON'T mention that you are "from The HSUS". You, of course, can say that you are a volunteer for The HSUS. I know this is all about semantics, but we just don't want to create any confusion in the minds of your state legislators. Does this make sense?

And now some helpful tips:

**Prepare.** Usually there is a time limit, such as three minutes at local hearings. Prepare your presentation to include two or three key points that can be made within the time limit. Practice presenting your testimony. Prepare a written version to submit at the hearing.

**Arrive early.** If you do not wish to wait, be sure to show up a half hour early to complete and turn in a sign-up card. If you do not arrive early prepare for a long wait if it is a contentious issue.

**Dress appropriately.** Wear what you would normal wear to a religious service or a business meeting such as a suit. A good impression can only help your message.

**Listen to other testimony.** Make sure you do not repeat verbatim what a previous speaker presented, although you can offer support for a point or position previously stated.

Identify yourself. Begin by giving your name, and usually, your full address. It is better to testify as a private citizen, but if you are testifying for a special interest group, state the name of the organization or group, briefly describe the group's mission, and state how many members it has.

Clearly state your position. Give a clear and concise description of your position on the issue or the bill.

Personalize your testimony. Use your own words and describe experiences without being melodramatic. Formulated testimony is not as eloquent as your own words. Describe or show through pictures how the issue affects you.

Don't read your testimony. The committee or council will listen to or appreciate your testimony more if you tell it from the heart and don't read a manuscript.

Request action. State exactly what you would like the committee or sponsor to do.

Offer solutions. Whether stating a specific or general approach to an issue, solutions or feasible alternatives are always well received. If you wish to convey amendments or revisions to legislation, provide your edited version of the bill.

Thank the committee. Close your presentation by thanking the committee or council for taking the time to listen to your viewpoint.

Offer to answer any questions. It is usually acceptable for the legislator to interrupt the presenter to ask questions. Answer all the questions honestly. If you do not know the answer, say so and, if possible, defer the question to another witness who has the information.

Thank you all again for all that you do for the animals and all the time you devote to getting the message across to activists in your area. I can't say enough what a BIG difference you are making to improve the lives of countless animals.

As always, I am available by phone or e-mail if you would like to chat about this or other HAN issues. Also, State Coordinators, please pass this message along to any of your district captains who don't have e-mail. Thanks!

Sincerely,

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