



CREATION JUSTICE MINISTRIES

Justice for God's planet and God's people.

Can I get a witness?

A Guide to Preparing Faith-Rooted Testimonies for Public Hearings

Jesus' greatest commandment is to love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Today, God's creation is facing profound threats, and our neighbors are suffering from the destruction of creation.

We put our faith into action to heal our communities by living in right relationship with God's creation. We can live this out individually, as households, as churches, as cities and counties, as states, and as nations.

Public policies have a profound impact on how we collectively relate to God's creation and each other. Public hearings regarding these policies are an excellent forum to share faith community stories, moral perspectives, and the heart of our faith.

In the tradition of the prophets, it is an important faith practice to lift up public witness about suffering, and to cry out about injustice. Likewise, it is important to cast a vision for the renewal creation.

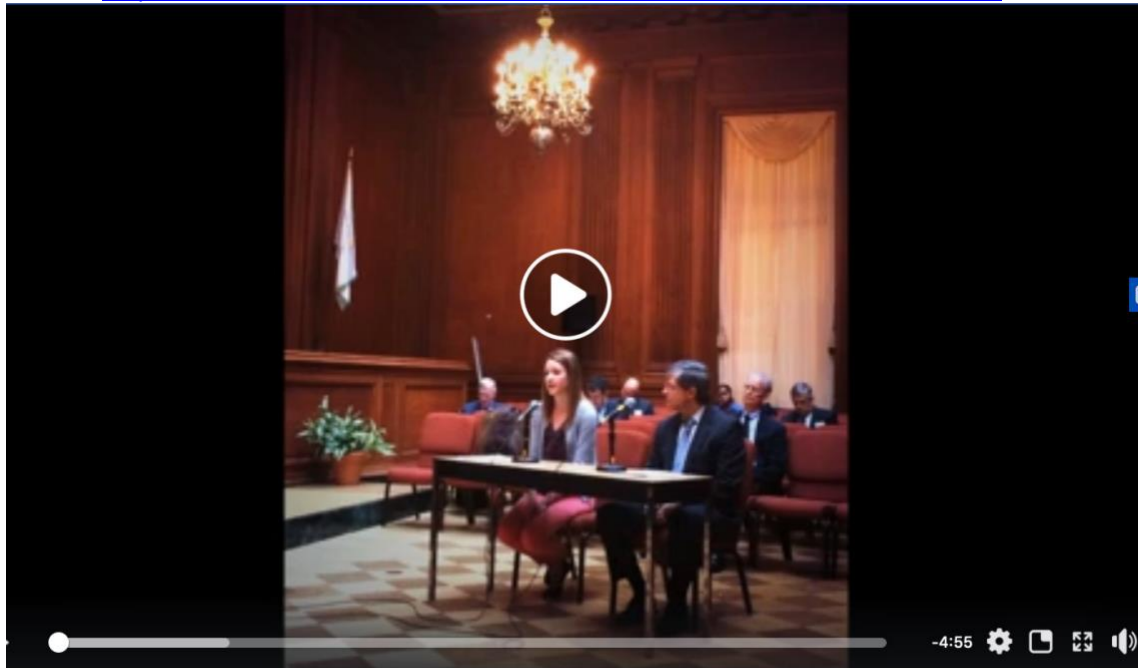
As you prepare to testify at a public hearing, here are a few important tips:

1. Keep to your timeframe. In most hearings, you will have 3-5 minutes. Double check how long you have BEFORE crafting your message.
 - **Remember this formula: 1 minute = 150 words**
 - i. For example, a 5-minute comment should not exceed 750 words
 - Write your comments down and practice them in front of the mirror or in front of friends and family, so you are familiar with what you want to say. You can time yourself, too!
2. Reflection the issue in light of your faith.
 - a. While you might not use all the material you generate in your faith reflections in your actual testimony, it is important to ensure *"the why"* behind the rest of your writing process is rooted in faith. It will influence the way you approach the issue.
 - b. Questions to consider:
 - What stories and pieces of wisdom from scripture speak to my understanding of this issue?

- What faith community rituals and traditions relate to this issue?
 - How does this issue relate to my sense of God’s justice in the world? Are there race, class, or other inequities at play?
3. Make it personal:
- a. **Use your comments to add the human face to this problem.**
 - b. Express your **personal concerns** about how this issue is threatening **your community** or the **health and safety risks to you and your family/friends**.
 - Have you been personally affected?
 - Do you live near a place that is affected?
 - Is a loved-one or a member of your faith community suffering health, safety, spiritual, or other social consequences?
 - Are you a professional who serves people suffering?
4. Consider visuals to help you tell your story.
- a. Some examples of great visuals from past hearings include:
 - Pictures of a place threatened by methane pollution;
 - Holding your baby with you at the podium, or pushing them in strollers, baby car seats, carriers. Older children also welcome.
 - Asthma inhalers, medicine bottles, healthcare bills, and medication for air-pollution related illnesses
5. Include a few key facts.
- Vet your sources of facts very carefully. Make sure any fact you cite comes from a reputable source. The internet is full of spurious claims. It will jeopardize your message if you cite inaccurate information.
 - Unless you are steeped in it already, don’t worry about researching or using highly technical information. Remember the perspective of a community member who is not an “expert” is highly valuable, because the public policy affects you and those who you love.
 - You will likely read and learn much more than you will convey in your testimony. Be careful not to engage in information overload.
 - Pick one or two illustrative statistics that fit with the faith-based moral frame and/or story you have chosen to share.
6. If you are attending the hearing in-person, bring two paper copies of your written testimony:
- Bring TWO hard copies of your testimony to submit to the official record. Your comments can be typed or handwritten. You may also be able to submit your testimony online after the hearing.
 - Be sure your testimony includes some form of contact information, but remember, it may become a public document available online.

Example Video of Public Testimony Before Environmental Protection Agency

Find at: <https://www.facebook.com/200065186695501/videos/632167750151907/>



Creation Justice Ministries

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Example Written Public Hearing Testimony: Methane Pollution Regulations

Docket Number: EPA-HQ-OAR-2010-0505-7736

Hello, my name is [your name] and I am from [your hometown]. Thank you for this opportunity to offer comment. I come here to today as a person of faith who is active in Creation Justice Ministries to speak out in opposition to EPA's proposed delay of its June 2016 new source performance standards for the oil and gas industry.

As a person of faith, I wish to frame this as a moral issue. My moral compass, and that of many people of faith, is guided by the calling in the Book of Genesis to respect that the Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, and that our human role is to tend and keep the Earth, as well as care for our neighbors.

I am here today because lives are at stake, and all life is precious to God. Clean air is NOT a luxury. It is necessary for life. Along with methane, oil and gas operations spew other toxic pollution into the air—polluting the air we breathe and causing rates of asthma attacks in children to increase. We are called to protect the health of all God's people, as well as other creatures sharing our eco-system. Many of us live in areas plagued by asthma, which is partially caused by pollution. Communities of color disproportionately suffer from asthma.

Methane is a finite "natural resource," a gift from God that we are called to steward responsibly. Methane is the primary component of natural gas. Methane helps many of us to heat our homes and to cook. Each year, oil and gas companies waste \$330 million worth of natural gas through venting, flaring, and leaks of methane on public and tribal lands. These practices waste energy resources and spew them recklessly into the atmosphere, which is dangerous.

Methane is a highly potent greenhouse gas – 86 times as powerful as CO₂ over a 20 year time-frame – making it a powerful contributor to climate change. Being part of the global Church, I am often exposed to stories of severe climate disruptions: hurricanes, floods, and droughts that require relief. As the Church, we take up collections, but we know the source of the problem is our over-consumption. It is time to be responsible for our pollution.

Strong federal safeguards, like EPA's new source performance standards, that reduce dangerous methane pollution from the oil and gas industry are essential for protecting the health of our communities and families. EPA's standards represented an important step forward in protecting the health and safety of communities and workers--reducing missed school days for asthma sufferers and reducing emergency room visits and healthcare costs.

The oil and gas industry must take responsibility for their pollution, rather than asking the public and God's creation to bear the burden. This rule is a commonsense way to protect our all of creation and our communities by reducing dangerous pollution.

I strongly urge the EPA not to delay, revise, or rescind these life-saving and common sense rules.