



SPEAK TO POWER

Public speaking can be a little scary, but there are times when speaking your mind is absolutely necessary, so here are some tips to make it easier and more effective.

More than “what should I say,” you need to identify *what it is you want others to hear*. What one thing do you want them to understand? And how can you demonstrate that what you want would be good for everyone?

Research.

- Be sure you’re talking to the right people. Is it a city or a county or a state road or bridge? Make these are the true decision makers.
- Check the council or committee’s recent meeting records or minutes. Have they dealt with the same issue in the past? What are you proposing that’s different or better?
- Find out who else is talking about the problem. Has the issue been in the local news? Know who is supporting the same position as you – and whom you’re going to be up against.

Plan.

- When is the next meeting of the relevant committee or council? Are infrastructure issues on the agenda? (Usually this kind of info is on city or state websites.)
- Some meetings require you to fill out a speaker card or provide some kind of advance notice. Again, check the website or call city hall to find out how it works in your community.
- If the committee will be taking action or voting about the issue that concerns you during the meeting you’re attending, be sure you read all the supporting materials and understand what the vote will mean to your point of view. Also, prior to the meeting submit your key materials so they may be part of the discussion as well.

Write It Down.

- No matter how comfortable you are speaking to others, be sure to make notes.
- Each speaker is given a limited amount of time (often 2 or 3 minutes) to speak. Practice your speech so you know you can comfortably finish in that time.
- Try not to read from a piece of paper. Have some bullet points so you don’t forget key thoughts, but look at the council members when you’re speaking. Let them see and hear how important this is to you, your family, and your fellow citizens.

Listen.

- Others may be talking about the same issue at the meeting you attend. Pay attention and make adjustments to your remarks, if needed. You may learn something you didn’t know or discover that there are others on your side.
- Don’t repeat what others have already said. Mention that you agree with an earlier point, but don’t repeat all the same details someone else has stated. Council members will realize that there are people who share the same goal. This is a powerful message to send to any government council.



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Go For It.

- Wear office-appropriate clothing.
- Walk confidently to the podium.
- State your name and any relevant affiliations, or if you're representing a group of people.
- Clearly explain your position and any supporting facts or evidence. *This is the most important part.* This is why you did all the work. Speak up. Look the committee in the eye.
- Don't go over the allotted time.
- Do say thank you.
- Follow up either at subsequent meetings or using email, and send along supporting materials if you haven't sent them already.

Participate! And let us know if you have had experience with this and have suggestions for others.

Drop us a line at info@bepreparedtostop.org and we'll share any additional tips and tools with everyone.