



**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS**

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**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

# Congressional Testimony Handbook

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# Congressional Testimony Handbook

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# Introduction

Increasingly, Congress calls on NOAA to testify on a broad range of issues from our predictions on the hurricane season, to the state of the oceans, to the potential application of unmanned aircraft systems. The Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) compiled the information contained in the *Congressional Testimony Handbook*, in coordination with the Line Office (LO) Legislative Teams, as a tool to assist in NOAA's ongoing efforts to draft and present the best possible testimony to Members of Congress. The *Handbook* is a complement to the *NOAA Procedures Manual for Congressional Communications*.

We are here to work with you to communicate to Members of Congress what NOAA is all about in an accurate, effective, and consistent manner. All of our communications to Congress must demonstrate how NOAA is addressing the needs and interests of the audience and underscore that NOAA is meeting its mission goals. Ultimately, testimony should educate, motivate, and activate the Members and their staff.

Our testimony should be clear and upfront about how NOAA benefits the nation, and reinforced throughout by citing concrete successes and programs. The Members should walk away from the hearing with a clear understanding of how NOAA is benefiting the daily lives of the American people and our economy through our efforts to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, and our work to conserve and protect our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Please use the information contained in the *Congressional Testimony Handbook*. This handbook provides not only important information concerning the overall testimony process, but specific guidelines for formatting, content, and structure. The OLA's Congressional and Legislative Specialists are here to help you, and we appreciate your assistance in presenting NOAA's vision and mission to Congress.

Eric Webster  
Director  
Office of Legislative Affairs

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## Chapter

## 1

# Written Testimony

## *Preparing Written Testimony for Congressional Hearings*

Written testimony prepared for a congressional hearing is a formal submission of NOAA's policy, position, roles, and responsibilities related to the topic discussed. The goal of the testimony is to address the issues requested by the committee and to communicate a positive, consistent, accurate, and effective message to Members of Congress.

The LO Legislative Team and the OLA are here to help you. We have a Legislative Affairs Specialist dedicated to helping the LOs during the written testimony drafting process. This may include working with you to develop an outline for the testimony to help focus your message, assisting in the development of themes and supporting examples, as well as providing writing assistance as needed.

In conjunction with the guidelines discussed in the chapter on [Oral Testimony](#), the information regarding written testimony contained in the following sections will help you develop the best product possible for NOAA to deliver to Congress.

## Process Schedule

When Congress decides to hold a hearing on an issue related to NOAA, a congressional staff member will contact the OLA. Every hearing and related process schedule for testimony is different. Outlined below is a **general overview** of the basic steps and timeline for drafting and clearance of congressional testimony in the best-case scenario.

### HEARING NOTIFICATION

The OLA is responsible for notifying each of the LOs when a hearing is scheduled and testimony or other product is required. The OLA will generally send an e-mail to the LO Legislative Team that outlines the details of the hearing

(as currently known) and will provide the schedule of when testimony must be completed, cleared by the LO, and submitted to the OLA for processing through the clearance chain.

Some testimony requires the contribution and review of multiple offices. The LO that is given the lead for drafting the testimony by the OLA is responsible for ensuring that all relevant offices (or Matrix Teams) have an opportunity to contribute to, and review, the testimony.

#### THE DRAFTING PROCESS

The OLA has a Legislative Affairs Specialist dedicated to working with the LOs during the testimony drafting process (**and prior to the official clearance process within the LO or the OLA**). This may include working with you to develop an outline for the testimony to help focus your message, assisting in the development of themes and supporting examples, providing guidance on linking the subject to NOAA's mission(s), assisting with writing as needed, and identifying potential policy and clearance issues.

#### THE CLEARANCE PROCESS

Generally, once the testimony is written, it takes up to eight business days for clearance. The testimony must then be delivered to the committee two or three business days prior to the hearing. Together, this means that testimony must generally be completed 8-11 business days prior to the date of the hearing.

For example, if we are notified on Friday, September 1, 2006 that a hearing will take place on Thursday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, that means that the testimony may have to be written, cleared by the LO, and submitted to the OLA on, or about, Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup>. Sometimes this schedule is compressed or expanded, and the LO Legislative Team and the OLA staff will work with you to meet all deadlines.

#### CLEARANCE STEP 1

Once the draft testimony is completed (with the drafting assistance of the OLA's Legislative Affairs Specialist as needed or requested), the testimony is ready for clearance within the LO.

#### CLEARANCE STEP 2

Once the LO clears the testimony, it is submitted to one of two designated Legislative Affairs Specialists in the OLA who manage the clearance process. Please note that the OLA has three Legislative Affairs Specialists — one who is dedicated to the drafting process as noted above, and two whose responsibility is the official clearance process of all testimony, views letters, and other items.

The OLA reviews and updates the testimony as needed for policy and clearance issues. **Please allow a minimum of one business day for this step, out of the 8-11 days generally required.**

## CLEARANCE STEP 3

The OLA will clear the testimony and then will send it to NOAA HQ (policy, budget, and legal offices). NOAA HQ will notify the OLA of any questions, issues, concerns, and requested edits. The Legislative Affairs Specialist who handles clearance will contact the LO to review these items if needed. **Please allow a minimum of two business days for this step, out of the 8-11 days generally required.**

## CLEARANCE STEP 4

Once NOAA HQ clears the testimony, it goes to the Department of Commerce (DOC). The DOC will notify the OLA of any questions, issues, concerns, and requested edits. The Legislative Affairs Specialist who handles clearance will contact the LO to review these items if needed. **Please allow a minimum of two business days for this step, out of the 8-11 days generally required.**

## CLEARANCE STEP 5

Once the DOC clears the testimony, it goes to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) who will route it through the White House, Council on Environmental Quality, and other federal agencies and offices as needed. The OMB will notify the OLA of any questions, issues, concerns, and requested edits. The Legislative Affairs Specialist who handles clearance will contact the LO to review these items if needed. **Please allow a minimum of three business days for this step, out of the 8-11 days generally required.**

## TESTIMONY COMPLETED

Once everyone has cleared the testimony, the OLA will send the LO a final version, and the OLA will be responsible for submitting cleared testimony to the Hill. All final written testimony is available on the OLA website at <http://www.legislative.noaa.gov/>.

## Format

Please format the written testimony using the guidelines below. This information is also incorporated into the **Written Testimony Template**.

- Submit all testimony cleared by the LO to the OLA electronically as a **Microsoft Word file** to facilitate track changes or red line editing.
- The testimony should be **single spaced and 8-10 pages in length** maximum, or five pages minimum. Final length is determined by the space needed to effectively answer the questions that we are asked.
- The **page setup** is portrait, with 1.25-inch margins on both sides, and 1-inch margins on the top and bottom of the page.

- The **header and the footer** are 12-point font, regular Times Roman.
- The **title heading** is 12-point font, regular Times Roman, all capital letters, bold, and centered.
- **Main section headings** are 12-point font, regular Times Roman, title case, bold.
- **Subsection headings** are 12-point font, regular Times Roman, title case, underlined.
- The **body of the testimony** is 12-point font, regular Times Roman.
- **Do not bold or underline text** within the testimony **except for the section headings** noted above, and **do not include live links** to websites or other documents.

## Content

The following sections outline a number of points related to the overall content of the written testimony, as well as specific parts of testimony structure.

### General Guidelines

- **The focus of the hearing will determine the overall content of the testimony.** When a committee sends an invitation letter to NOAA requesting us to testify, they ask us to address certain issues or answer specific questions. Make sure the testimony is **responsive** to those issues and questions.
- Develop an **outline** early in the writing process. The OLA’s Legislative Affairs Specialist can assist with this during the drafting process. The following *NOAA Organic Act* testimony outline is a good example of picking only a couple key points.

#### **Outline:**

1. Introduction
2. The Need for the Organic Act
3. Administration Bill
4. HR 50
  - Organizational Structure
  - Impact on other Federal Agencies
  - Creation of an Advisory Board
5. Conclusion

- Testimony should **educate, motivate, and activate** the Members and their staff.
- Beware of **perception vs. reality**. What we may perceive as the priority in our testimony (discussing every detail of every program related to the issue), may not be the reality of what the Members want, or need, to hear.

It is important that we **clearly understand the point of the hearing, the audience, and issues** that need to be discussed. Sometimes we are asked to address very technical issues and then it is appropriate to provide detail. Other hearings focus on the broader themes and missions, not the technical nuances of an activity or research program.

"This pudding has no theme."  
- Winston Churchill referring to a bland dessert

- It is not possible to discuss every related issue in the written testimony. The Congressional Affairs Specialist may work with the LO to compile a **briefing packet** of previously cleared documents as a **supplement to the written testimony** to distribute to the Members and staff prior to the hearing. The packet may include fact sheets, strategic plans, previous testimony, and technical reports that enhance and relate to the written testimony.
- When a number of people contribute to testimony it can be difficult to make the testimony **speak with one voice and sound consistent**.
- Testimony should be **clear, concise, and composed** for the right audience — Members of Congress and their staff. Most Members and staff do not come from scientific backgrounds, and the testimony must be easily understood and usable by them.
- Increase the level of **attention, retention, and comprehension** by the reader. Members and staff should not read a sentence or paragraph three times and still have no idea what it means, says, why it is included, or why it is relevant.
- Referencing **previously published NOAA documents** can help keep the testimony short and on topic.
- All language in the testimony must **support the president's budget**, cannot include any language to request funding beyond that budget, and cannot imply a need for more. This includes discussing or implying program expansion or new projects not included in the president's budget.

- Pay careful attention when including **earmarked programs**. If specifically requested, we can include descriptions of these programs, but they need to be fact based and focused on what we have done, rather than what we plan to do in the future. The clearance process will cut any language that is overly supportive of any programs not included in the president’s budget.
- Testimony that discusses **multiple agencies** may add to the clearance time. Do not criticize other agencies and be careful not to overstate NOAA’s role in the issue. The same goes for any reference to states, local, and tribal entities.

### The Header

The header should contain the word ‘DRAFT’ and the date. Do not use the words ‘confidential’ or ‘internal use only’. The OLA removes this information during the clearance process.

### The Title Heading

The title heading contains the following information:

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF**  
**[NAME OF THE WITNESS]**  
**[THEIR TITLE]**  
**[THEIR OFFICE]**  
**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC**  
**ADMINISTRATION**  
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**HEARING ON**  
**“TITLE OF HEARING”**

**BEFORE THE**  
**[NAME OF THE COMMITTEE]**  
**[NAME OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE IF RELEVANT]**  
**[UNITED STATES SENATE or UNITED STATES HOUSE OF**  
**REPRESENTATIVES]**

**[DATE]**

### The Introduction

- The introduction should always start with a **greeting to the chair and Members** of the committee, followed by a thank you for the invitation.
- A statement of **who the witness is** follows.

- Note the **issue or themes**. Focus on **three or four main points** you want your audience to understand at the end of the testimony. The written testimony cannot be a list of everything a program does, and hopes to do, and our message will get lost if we try to include it all.
- Why is this issue important to **NOAA’s mission, goals, and programs**?
- In written testimony about a specific piece of legislation that NOAA supports, **thank the Member(s)** on the committee who introduced the bill, or who have been strong supporters of the legislation, NOAA, our mission and programs.

### The Body of the Written Testimony

- Testimony should flow in a **logical outline from the introduction, to the body, to the conclusion**. The body should elaborate and develop the central theme(s), and link each section covering the three or four main points to the next or previous or both.
- **List the facts, challenges, solutions, and benefits**. Each fact establishes a certain point, which leads to the next point and so forth, ultimately ending with the thematic conclusion. Each point should clearly highlight the importance of the issue, how it relates to the purpose of the hearing and NOAA’s mission and activities, the benefits or challenges, and proposed solutions.
- **Back up the point** with specific examples, analogies, and reinforcing statistics.
- Try to **anticipate audience questions and provide answers** within the testimony. For example:
 

“The United States needs a strong commercial aquaculture industry.”  
**Why?**  
 “In order to meet projected seafood demand and supply the nation’s stock enhancement needs based on recent research by NOAA scientists.”
- **Backup your statements with proof or the source**. Do not make general vague blanket statements that just sound good, they must also be true. Always use NOAA data where possible.
- Be mindful of **NOAA’s mission**, and where relevant, weave in NOAA sound bites. Please see the [Sound Bites](#) chapter for examples.

- Reference other relevant **policy documents** as appropriate, such as the *Ocean Action Plan*, the president’s budget, *Economic Statistics for NOAA* (always verify figures with the appropriate program staff as they may have changed), or previous reports and statements NOAA has provided Congress.
- **Do not speak over people’s heads.** Keep technical terms, acronyms, initialisms, and insider terms and details to a minimum as much as possible.
- **Remind the audience of the focus of the testimony** by repeating it a few times throughout the testimony to reinforce the central theme(s).

### Concluding Remarks

- Note again the issue or themes discussed, why this is important to NOAA’s mission, and a **summary of the main points** in the body of the testimony.
- **Finish** by thanking the Members of the committee, and offer to answer any questions they might have.

### The Footer

- The footer should contain the **page number**, 12-point font, regular Times Roman, centered.

### Footnotes

- Use footnotes to **document the source for non-NOAA facts or statistics** not referenced in the text. This is important during the clearance process.

### Grammatical and Editorial Guidelines

- The OLA uses two guides as our primary **reference source** for standardizing and verifying common grammatical, stylistic, and formatting issues. These are:

*The Chicago Style Manual*; 15<sup>th</sup> Edition, University of Chicago Press, and  
*The Associated Press Stylebook*; The Associated Press

- **Acronym vs. initialism.** Acronyms are technically a term based on the initial letters of the various word elements and are read as a single word (NOAA or NATO). Acronyms are rarely preceded by an article such as ‘a’, ‘an’, or ‘the’. The verb tense for an acronym is based on the verb tense used if each word was used, and whether or not the term is plural or singular by definition.

Initialism refers to terms read aloud as a series of letters (the OLA or the DOC), and are generally preceded by an article such as ‘a’, ‘an’, or ‘the’. The articles may be removed during the clearance process if it is felt that it makes

the testimony too awkward. The verb tense for initialism is based on the verb tense used if each word was used, and whether or not the term is plural or singular by definition.

- **Define all acronyms the first time** they are used and place the acronym in parenthesis, or link it grammatically with the word ‘or’.

**Example:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, is the nation’s steward of the oceans.

If an acronym is too long or awkward, it is sometimes better to make future references in broader terms such as the Group, the Committee, the Agency, or other term.

- **Do not list an acronym** after the name if it does not appear again in the testimony.

“If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once.  
Then come back and hit it again.  
Then hit it a third time a tremendous whack.”  
- Winston Churchill

- **Use strong verbs and an active voice.** The following is an example of a sentence with passive voice revised to use the active voice.

**Passive voice:** “The recent oil spill is considered to be the leading cause of wetlands loss in the area.”

**Active voice:** “NOAA scientists consider the recent oil spill to be the leading cause of wetlands loss in the area.”

- **Be specific, definite, and concrete where possible.** Create a picture and path to your point.

**No:** “A period of unfavorable weather set in.”

**Yes:** “It rained every day for a week.”

- **Be concise.** Look for ways to minimize wording without losing the meaning. For example:

“it is evident that X produced Y” **can be replaced by** “X produced Y”

“at the present time” **can be replaced by** “now”

“it is worth pointing out in this context that” **can be replaced by** “note that”

“was of the opinion that” **can be replaced by** “believed”

“despite the fact that” **can be replaced by** “although”

Be careful not to make it too awkward. If you have the space to create links with words between thoughts and sentences, do so.

## Common Errors

- **Impact, effect, and affect** are often confused, misused, and abused.

Impact is a physical verb.

**Example:** The hurricane made impact with the coast this morning.

Effect, as a verb, means to cause.

**Example:** Overfishing may effect a decline in the health of the fish stock.

Effect, as a noun, means result.

**Example:** The effect of the hurricane was a large storm surge.

Affect, as a verb, means to influence and is not used as a noun except in psychology.

**Example:** NOAA is working to understand the affect of climate change on our weather.

- Certain words (**nation, government, state, federal, or tribal**) are not **capitalized** unless they are part of a formal name.

Normally, one does not capitalize the word ‘**administration**’ unless you define it first and note ‘Administration’ as the future reference use, such as the Bush Administration (Administration). However, common practice within NOAA, and the clearance chain, is to capitalize Administration without necessarily defining it.

The word ‘**president**’ should not be capitalized unless used as the formal title before one or more names, such as President Bush. However, common practice within NOAA, and other parts of the U.S. Government, is to capitalize President without necessarily defining it.

- Always capitalize the word **‘Members’** when referring to Members of Congress. This also applies to Members of the committee, as all of the members (generic) are Members of Congress.
- Always capitalize the word **‘Committee’** when referring to the specific committee holding the hearing. This rule applies to ‘Subcommittee’ as well, but often in testimony, the Subcommittee is generally referred to in the heading of the testimony and thereafter as the ‘Committee.’
- Italicize all **government reports and plans**, as well as names of **pieces of legislation**.
- Capitalize the word **‘Act’** if it is in the name of a piece of legislation. The word ‘bill’ is not capitalized in general reference.
- Italicize the names of **ships and vessels**, as well as **Latin terms for plants and animals**.
- **U.S. vs. United States**. Use the abbreviation of ‘U.S.’ only as an adjective. If referring to our country as a noun, use United States.

## Conclusion

There are many resources available to explore the numerous facets of writing. The information contained in this chapter are key items that the OLA and the LO Legislative Teams have identified as important to keep in mind when drafting written testimony for NOAA to present to Congress. The LO Legislative Team and the OLA’s Congressional and Legislative Affairs Specialists are here to help you develop the best, written testimony possible.

Remember, effective written testimony is not governed only by the rules of grammar or rhetoric, but by the response it evokes.

# Chapter 2

## Oral Testimony

### *Preparing Oral Testimony for Congressional Hearings*

NOAA officials present oral testimony when they appear at congressional hearings. The hearing provides NOAA's witness an opportunity to address the issues requested by the committee and to communicate a positive, consistent, accurate, and effective message to Members of Congress.

The LO Legislative Team and the OLA are here to help you. We have a Legislative Affairs Specialist dedicated to working with the LOs in drafting oral testimony. This may include working with you to help focus your message, assisting in the development of themes and supporting examples, as well as providing writing assistance as needed.

In conjunction with the guidelines discussed in the chapter on [Written Testimony](#), the points noted below will help you in the development of the best product possible for NOAA to deliver to Congress.

Please note that the process for drafting oral testimony varies from Line to Line. The LO Legislative Team for your office can clarify for you the process used in your Line. For example, the witness or the LO's Legislative Team may draft the initial version of the oral testimony and then pass it along to the program staff for review. Other offices ask the program staff, or the OLA, to complete the first draft.

### General Guidelines

- One must keep in the mind that the oral testimony **derives from the written testimony**, which is a formal submission of NOAA's policy, position, roles, and responsibilities related to the topic discussed.
- Do not include **views or policy statements** in the oral testimony that are **not in the written testimony**.

- Oral testimony is generally limited to **five minutes maximum**, and the witness should not exceed the time limit as the committee may cut the witness off.
- The often-cited rule-of-thumb is that **the average person speaks 130 words per minute** in a manner that is understandable and comprehensible to an audience.
- In general, **if you have time to say something then say it**. Do not cut out so much wording that the oral testimony sounds rough and awkward in order to try to fit in more examples or points that are already noted in the written testimony.
- Testimony should **educate, motivate, and activate** the Members and their staff.
- Beware of **perception vs. reality**. What we may perceive as the priority in our testimony (discussing every detail of every program related to the issue), may not be the reality of what the Members want, or need, to hear.

"Speeches measured by the hour, die with the hour."  
- Thomas Jefferson

- **Minimize technical jargon** as much as possible. Professionals used to writing reports on technical topics may find writing oral testimony quite a different process.
- **Ensure a rhythm and flow** as oral testimony is **for the ear and not the eye**. Read it aloud when you have finished writing it to time it and hear it. The testimony should not only read well silently, but also sound good read aloud.
- **Know your witness**. While a speaker's style and delivery can transform weak oral testimony and make it sound good, poor delivery can ruin the best-prepared oral testimony. Knowing how the witness speaks is essential in preparing the best oral testimony possible to ensure they are comfortable conveying the message clearly.
- The witness should **read the oral testimony aloud during the prebrief** to determine how comfortable they are with the wording, flow, structure, how the testimony sounds to others, and whether the testimony can be presented in five minutes or less.

- Oral testimony does not require formal clearance, but **review and comment by the LO Legislative Team and the OLA’s Congressional and Legislative Affairs Specialist is important.**

## Format

Please format the oral testimony using the guidelines below. This information is also incorporated into the **Oral Testimony Template.**

- The **heading** section is single-spaced, 10-point font, bold, is included for reference only, and is not part of the testimony spoken by the witness.
- The **body** of the oral testimony should be double-spaced, 14-point or larger based on what the witness prefers.
- Some witnesses prefer that the **section and subsection headings** be maintained to help them pause between key portions of text, or to clarify where they are. If used, the section headings are 14-point, bold, title case. Subsection headings are 14-point, underlined, title case.
- The oral testimony is **four to five pages in length** at most, which may vary slightly based on the size of the font the witness prefers. For example, oral testimony that is four pages long in 14-point font may be five pages long in 16-point font.

## Content

- The oral testimony should **summarize two or three major points** from the written testimony supported with examples, imagery, or anecdotes.
- Several congressional committees have asked the OLA to incorporate **one or two slides** or other **visual assistance** that enhances our oral testimony. These aids should not require the witness to stop and explain them unless that explanation is part of the oral testimony itself. This could be a poster, Power Point slide or loop, pictures, or if for instance the hearing was on invasive species, samples of some invasives in jars or containers.
- **A few good ways to start the testimony** is with an opening that contains a startling fact or statistic; compliments to the Members; a rhetorical or challenging question; a personal experience or human interest story to appeal to the emotions, reasonableness, or character of the audience; a memorable quote; or recent news story.
- Make the body of the oral testimony **memorable and understandable** through the words chosen and images created.

- **Use simple declarative statements** in an active voice when making important statements of fact, assertion, or opinion. Although, using passive voice is sometimes desirable to lend grace and variety to the speaker's flow of words.
- **The closing may be the only thing the audience will remember.** Turn a phrase, and create a striking image and emotion to make it memorable.

## Tips and Tricks to Make It the Best

- Sentences in oral testimony need to be short, simple, and direct. **An average spoken sentence runs from 8–16 words.** Anything longer is more difficult for an audience to follow by ear, absorb, and analyze quickly. By comparison, the average reader easily understands written sentences up to 30 words.
- Create clear transitions, or **aural signposts**, for paragraphs by using words such as 'secondly', 'finally', or 'as a result of'.
- **Punctuate for the ear and the lungs.** Use commas and em-dashes as useful guideposts to what lies ahead. Provide pauses for the witness to stress the point, or just to breathe.
- **Develop sound bites** to make the testimony memorable. Identify key messages and put them in punchier language.
- If we refer to an office or program by an acronym, **define the acronym the first time** used. While in the written testimony the acronym may be placed in parenthesis, in the oral testimony this should change for ease of presentation to 'the definition of the name, or acronym'.

**Example:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, is the nation's steward of the oceans.

If an acronym is too long or awkward, it is better in the oral to make future references in broader terms such as the Group, the Committee, the Agency, or other term.

- Great testimony **appeals to the imagination, emotion, and the ear.**
- **Convey ideas through images using people.** This could be individuals or groups such as farmers, fishermen, or children.

- **Give life to numbers.** Statistics are often the death of testimony, but they can also effectively crystallize your point if you add perspective and create a relatable, tangible image for the Members and staff.
- **Use repetition.** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech is a wonderful example of using repetition to enhance and focus a message.
- **Use variation.** Vary the testimony to incorporate a rhetorical question, a list, or sentence fragments to dramatize a point.
- **Use the "rule of three"** — three points, three examples, three adjectives.

## Conclusion

The LO Legislative Teams and the OLA's Congressional and Legislative Affairs Specialists are here to help you develop the best oral testimony possible. The information contained in this chapter are key items that the OLA and the LO Legislative Teams have identified as important when drafting oral testimony for NOAA to present to Congress.

Remember, effective oral testimony is not governed only by the rules of grammar or rhetoric, but by the response it evokes.

## Chapter

## 3

## Questions and Answers for Congressional Hearings

### *Preparing Questions and Answers for Congressional Hearings*

Questions and Answers, or Q&As, are developed prior to a congressional hearing and are a supplement and complement to the written and oral testimony. The OLA Congressional Specialist and the LO Legislative Team coordinate compiling the Q&As based on information conveyed by the committee and Member's staff, as well as items identified by NOAA HQ and the LO.

Q&As may highlight or address programs, activities, or issues that were not included or fully discussed in the testimony due to time, length, or other constraints. Although not part of the official testimony clearance process, Q&As may be reviewed by NOAA HQ, the DOC, or others depending on the issue and the questions.

The final Q&As are prepared by the OLA Congressional Specialist for NOAA's witness and are reviewed during the prebriefs. Q&As are an important part of preparing the witness and ensuring they have the tools necessary to comfortably address the majority of questions that they may be asked during the hearing. Generally, Members will ask the witness questions after everyone has testified, although this is not always the case.

The Q&As for the hearing are different than Questions for the Record (QFRs). Members submit QFRs to NOAA after a hearing in which they ask for clarification and additional explanation.

Consider the points noted below for Q&As, in conjunction with the guidelines and points discussed under the previous chapters. These will help you in the development of the best product possible for NOAA to deliver to Congress.

## Q&As Format

Please format the Q&As using the guidelines below. This information is also incorporated into the **Q&As Template**.

- The first page of the Q&As should be an **index (or table of contents)** of the questions and answers for the hearing along with the title of the hearing.
- The **title** of the Q&As index page should be at least 14-point font, bold, title case.
- The **text of the questions** on the index page should be at least 10 or 12-point font, normal, sentence case.
- **Bold key words** in the list of questions for quick reference.
- **No more than 5-10 questions total**. Sometimes you may need a couple more based upon the range of topics discussed within the testimony.
- List **one Q&A** per page.
- Format the **question** in at least 14-point font, bold.
- Format the **answer section heading** in all capitals, at least 14-point font, bold.
- Format the **answer(s)** in at least 12-point font, bulleted.
- **Serif vs. non-serif**. Some witnesses prefer a serif font such as Times Roman, while others find that a non-serif font, such as Arial, is easier to read as they reference the Q&As.

## Q&As Content

- Ensure you **address the questions or issues** noted in the invitation letter.
- **Anticipate the hard questions** that may be asked by the committee.
- Write the answer as if the witness will be stating those **exact words** during the hearing.
- **Keep it simple and direct**. You generally do not need more than two or three answers depending on the complexity of the question. Some budget or technical program questions may require answers with multiple parts.

- Each bullet should be **two sentences** in length at most.
- Make sure to have one or two **specific examples** prepared to back up general answers.
- **Include background information (in a bulleted format) only as necessary.** If a lengthy background description is needed for a topic, this should be included in the background information section of the briefing book.
- **Address Member specific issues.** For example, if a Member has a well-known concern or interest in a specific program related to the hearing, be prepared to address it.

## Example Q&A

The following pages contain an example of a set of recently developed Q&As.

### **Index Of Questions And Answers – State Of The Oceans 2006 Hearing**

NOAA’s **budget** towards implementation of recommendations from the U.S.

Commission on Ocean Policy?.....	1
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How much will it cost to build <b>IOOS</b> ? What is NOAA spending on IOOS?.....	3
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The NWHI Monument was created by Presidential Proclamation on June 15; <b>why has it taken so long</b> to determine how the Monument will be managed?.....	8
Will <b>additional legislation be needed to manage the Monument</b> ?.....	9
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**How much money in NOAA's budget is directed toward implementing recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (USCOP) report? The *Ocean Action Plan*?**

**ANSWER:**

- As you know, the Administration responded to the Commission's report with the *U.S. Ocean Action Plan*, which does not commit any new resources.
- Of NOAA's \$3.7 billion FY 2007 request, **\$1.8 billion is ocean-related**. This represents an increase of approximately \$100 million over the FY 2006 request. Highlights of the budget increase include:
  - \$20 million for fisheries activities in the Gulf of Mexico
  - \$6 million for the Open Rivers Initiative
  - \$12 million to complete and operate the Tsunami Warning System
  - \$10 million for nautical survey backlog
  - \$5 million for critical mapping, charting, and data improvements
- A key action, which has not required new resources, has been improving coordination of federal agencies with ocean-related missions through the creation of the interagency Committee on Ocean Policy and its subsidiary groups.

## Are there any legal or procedural roadblocks that prevent better ocean governance?

### ANSWER:

- Much progress can be made to improve ocean governance through collaboration and cooperation under existing authorities. However, there are two pieces of legislation that would increase our capabilities:
  1. Passage of a ***NOAA Organic Act*** is needed to consolidate NOAA's mission and responsibilities, which now are authorized in over two hundred separate statutes. A *NOAA Organic Act* would clarify NOAA's leadership role, strengthening its ability to manage ocean and coastal resources.
  2. The lack of U.S. accession to the **United Nations "Convention on the Law of the Sea,"** or UNCLOS, hampers our ability to enhance and protect our national security interests and to demonstrate international leadership in the oceans.

## How much will it cost to build IOOS? What is NOAA spending on IOOS in FY 2006? How much is targeted for IOOS in the FY 2007 President's Budget?

### ANSWER:

- In **FY06, NOAA will spend \$770.5 million** on investments related to IOOS. This includes approximately **\$100 million in earmarks** above NOAA's FY06 Request.
- NOAA's contributions to IOOS in the **FY 2007 Request are \$700.7 million**. This includes continued support for existing observing systems, data management and communications, and modeling and analysis capabilities.
- NOAA is **requesting an increase of \$89.1 million for IOOS above NOAA's baseline**. This includes funding to improve NOAA's ocean observing networks, strengthen the tsunami warning program, expand fisheries stock assessments, and improve the National Water Level Observation Network.

### Background

- The U.S. Ocean Commission lists the ongoing annual cost of a fully integrated system as \$753 million per year of additional funding when it is up and running, including transferring the ongoing operation of Earth Observing Satellites to NOAA (\$150 million).
- Without the satellite operations transfer, the estimate is \$603 million per year of new funds. The Commission's estimate is based on four program elements described in the U.S. Commission on Policy report, including: accelerate the implementation of the U.S. commitment to the Global Ocean Observing System; develop data communications and data management systems for the national IOOS; enhance and expand existing federal observing programs; and develop regional observing systems.
- Based on current information, NOAA agrees with the funding estimates cited by the U.S. Ocean Commission on Ocean Policy as they relate to the program elements described in the Commission's report. NOAA is taking the Commission's recommendations into consideration as we work with our agency partners to move forward with the development of IOOS as outlined in the President's *Ocean Action Plan*.

**What is the status of the *Ocean Action Plan* items assigned to NOAA? How many have been completed? How many are incomplete?**

**ANSWER:**

- NOAA was designated by the Council on Environmental Quality as **lead or co-lead on 46 items**.
- **To date, 27 NOAA actions have been completed while 19 actions are still ongoing. Many of the ongoing actions will be completed in the next year and a half** such as developing a status report on deep-sea corals in the U.S. EEZ, conducting community workshops to improve watershed protection, and improving navigation by updating the National Water Level Observation Network.
- Other ongoing items are long-term commitments and include the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, coordinating ocean and coastal mapping activities, and helping to implement *Coral Reef Local Action Strategies*.

## How could NOAA be reorganized to better implement the Commissions' recommendations? What are your thoughts on reorganization?

### ANSWER:

- One of my top priorities at NOAA has been to **break down the traditional stove pipes** of our line office structure to better fulfill our mission. NOAA's organizational approach now **also employs goal teams** focused on anticipating and planning for issues associated with NOAA's four mission goals (eco-systems, weather and water, commerce and transportation and climate change).
- I have established **specific councils** to address policy associated with high priority activities and our line offices are working more closely with stakeholders to deliver services and fulfill stewardship responsibilities.
- The Commission's final report and the *U.S. Ocean Action Plan* both called for strengthening the existing federal agency structure, including establishing an **Organic Act for NOAA**. The Administration transmitted a proposal for such legislation to Congress in April 2005, and we are hopeful that this Committee will play an integral part in its passage.
- Most importantly, NOAA believes the agency must maintain its current level of flexibility in determining how best to structure itself to respond to progressive mandates such as ecosystem-based management. **Management flexibility has proved to be a vital tool** for NOAA leadership in responding to the recommendations of the Commission.

## Should NOAA be independent from the Department of Commerce?

### ANSWER:

- **NOAA is a critical part of the Department of Commerce** and the Administration's *NOAA Organic Act* maintains that **relationship**.
- I do believe it is time for NOAA to have a **single, comprehensive organic act, which lays out NOAA's mission and functions**, rather than the myriad of legislation and authorizations that NOAA must operate under. Doing so would greatly **strengthen NOAA's ability** to manage ocean and coastal resources, to undertake NOAA's research activities, and to engage in outreach and education activities.
- The **U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy reached this same conclusion**. In its report, the Commission recommends immediate Congressional action on an organic act to enhance NOAA's ability to conduct operations "consistent with the principles of ecosystem-based management and with its primary functions."

**Please clarify the status of the NWHI sanctuary designation process.**

**ANSWER:**

- **On June 15, 2006, the President issued “Proclamation 8031”** and immediately provided for comprehensive protection of the resources of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- NOAA is currently managing the monument and **there has been no break in operations since we have been managing the area as the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve for five years.** We continue to issue permits for activities in the area and work with our partners in the region to provide for comprehensive management of what is now a marine national monument.
- With the proclamation in place, coordination amongst existing management regimes and activities in the Monument, including the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Kure Atoll State Marine Sanctuary, and the NWHI State Marine Refuge is underway.
- **NOAA is working with the Department of the Interior and the state of Hawaii to coordinate these many activities consistent with the language in the proclamation.**

**The NWHI Monument was created by presidential proclamation on June 15; why has it taken so long to determine how the monument will be managed?**

**ANSWER:**

- Under the proclamation, actions taken in developing the sanctuary will carry over to the Marine National Monument, including the *Draft Management Plan*. Review of this document is ongoing and will take place utilizing a “rolling” timeline.
- NOAA is currently working with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of Hawaii to manage resources in this area under an agreement that was signed on May 19, 2006. This agreement remains in effect, even after the issuance of the presidential proclamation. As directed by the proclamation, NOAA will work with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the state to update the agreement as necessary to reflect its provisions.
- The NWHI coral reef ecosystem is the site of ongoing scientific and monitoring activities to explore, map and better understand the unique ecosystem. These efforts are often joint projects among many partners, including NOAA, the Fish and Wildlife Service, Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, the University of Hawaii, and others that must be further coordinated.
- NOAA must work closely with our partners in the development of the operational regulations and development of a draft management plan with coordinated programs for research & monitoring, native Hawaiian practices, education, and conservation and management.
- A draft management plan addressing the management requirements of the monument will be released for public review in the coming months, and we look forward to engaging the public in this important process.

**Will additional legislation be needed to manage the NWHI Monument?**

**ANSWER:**

- At this time, NOAA and our partners are focused on implementing the proclamation and following through on the regime it outlined, and we have not focused our attention on whether additional legislation may or may not be of value. Should that become desirable at a later date, we would be sure to discuss any potential legislative changes with you where appropriate.

**What is the status of the *Ocean Research Priorities Plan*? When will it be completed?**

**ANSWER:**

- **A draft version of the plan has been prepared and was reviewed** by the Subcommittee on Integrated Management of Ocean Resources as well as the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology Policy.
- **Within the month, the plan will be submitted for review to the National Research Council** and will be published in the *Federal Register* for a 30-day public comment period.
- The National Research Council review is expected to take approximately three months, and once completed it will go through another interagency review. The plan is expected to be released again to the public towards the end of the 2006 calendar year.

**What are the top 10 actions Congress should take to implement both Commissions' recommendations?**

**ANSWER: - To implement the Commissions' recommendations, Congress should support the following legislation as identified in the *U.S. Ocean Action Plan*:**

- Passage of a *NOAA Organic Act*
- Reauthorization of the *Magnuson- Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act*
- Accession to the U.N. "Convention on the Law of the Sea"
- Passage of an *Ocean and Coastal Observation System Act*
- Passage of a *National Offshore Aquaculture Act*
- Reauthorization of the *Marine Mammal Protection Act*
- Reauthorize the *Coastal Zone Management Act*
- Reauthorize the *Coral Reef Conservation Act*
- Passage of the *Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act*
- Pursue other reauthorizations whose schedules are overdue or upcoming

## Chapter

## 4

## Sound Bites

### *Written and Oral Testimony Sound Bites*

NOAA's testimony to Congress should educate, motivate, and activate the Members and their staff. We cannot assume that all of the Members on the committee are fully aware of NOAA's programs and goals. Each hearing is an opportunity — an opportunity to state our mission, to share our vision, and to reinforce the benefits to the nation that NOAA brings.

As we strive to build 'One NOAA' across our programs and activities, we must also speak with one voice in our congressional testimony. The following sections highlight some of the many varied ways we can say who NOAA is and what we do. Please note that these are only a few examples of previously used language in NOAA testimony and publications.

### NOAA's Vision and Mission

- NOAA's vision is an informed society that uses a comprehensive understanding of the role of the oceans, coasts, and atmosphere in the global ecosystem to make the best social and economic decisions.
- Success in achieving our vision depends upon how well we understand Earth's dynamic, natural systems and how well we assess the affects of human activities upon those systems.
- NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs.
- NOAA's work touches the daily lives of every person in the United States and in much of the world. From weather forecasts in the Midwest to fisheries management on the East Coast, from safe navigation to coastal services in

the Gulf, from remote sensing to climate research and ocean exploration, NOAA's products and services contribute to the foundation of a healthy economy and affect approximately one-third of the nation's gross domestic product.

- Among NOAA's diverse missions, our tasks include understanding and predicting changes in the Earth's environment and acting as the nation's principal steward of coastal and marine resources critical to our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs.
- NOAA's goal to conserve, protect, manage, and restore living marine resources and coastal and ocean resources is critical to the health of the United States' economy.
- NOAA is a science-based agency with regulatory, operational, and information service responsibilities.
- NOAA is committed to an ecosystem approach to resource management that addresses the many simultaneous pressures affecting ecosystems.
- One of NOAA's mission goals is to understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond.
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events, while providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas, protects and guides our use of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment that sustains us all.
- NOAA monitors the health of our nation's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes resources; administers civilian ocean programs; and protects and preserves the nation's living marine resources through scientific research, fisheries management, enforcement, and habitat conservation.
- NOAA studies climate and global change, ensures the protection of coastal oceans and the management of marine resources, provides weather services, and manages worldwide environmental data.

## General Program References

- NOAA is protecting lives and livelihood.

- NOAA science adds value.
- To truly understand our planet, we must be able to take the Earth’s pulse everywhere it beats — which is all over the globe.
- You may not realize it, but every day you rely on information provided by NOAA.
- Our program activities are intended to produce healthy and productive ecosystems that benefit society.
- NOAA is a steward of marine resources for the benefit of the nation, through science-based conservation and management, and the protection of ecosystem health.
- At NOAA, we work to protect the lives and livelihoods of Americans, and provide products and services that benefit the economy, environment, and public safety of the nation.
- Developed countries, such as the United States, have a responsibility for stewardship of the marine ecosystem and for setting standards to protect and manage shared resources and harvests of the ocean.
- Climate shapes the environment, natural resources, economies, and social systems that people depend upon worldwide.
- While humanity has learned to contend with some aspects of climate’s natural variability, major climatic events, combined with the stresses of population growth, economic growth, and land-use practices, can impose serious consequences on society.
- NOAA’s climate information, products, and services enable society to understand and respond to changing climate conditions.

## NOAA Organizations

- **The National Weather Service**  
The National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather, water, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters, and ocean areas. In performing this critical mission, NWS provides for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS infrastructure facilitates national and international data and products that, in turn, serve other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community.

- **The National Ocean Service**

The National Ocean Service (NOS) endeavors to balance our use of coastal and ocean resources today with the need to protect, preserve, and restore these priceless realms for future generations. NOS collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides scientific understanding about coastal resource conditions, issues, and problems. NOS's unique ability to the nation rests on its ability to carry out studies on a national scale, to sustain long-term monitoring assessment of natural resources, and to provide a variety of products and services to the nation.

- **The National Marine Fisheries Service**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for the stewardship for the world's largest exclusive economic zone. NMFS protects and preserves the nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, fisheries management, law enforcement, and habitat conservation. NMFS has both domestic and international responsibilities, and is a leading voice for the economic benefits that can be derived from sustainable use and conservation of living marine resources.

- **The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service**

The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) observes our Earth, our oceans, and our atmosphere every day and uses these observations to benefit all people and sectors of society. Composed of the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites for short-range warning and "nowcasting," and polar-orbiting environmental satellites for longer term forecasting, the system provides the U.S. space-based component of a global monitoring system. NESDIS provides data and information to a broad spectrum of users, for example, NOAA forecasters issuing storm warnings, researchers studying the environment, and national and international research agencies.

- **The Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research**

The Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) is NOAA's primary research and development organization, and studies the Earth system from the deep ocean to the upper atmosphere. OAR develops the products and services that help us understand and predict environmental changes on local to global scales, and at time scales from minutes to millennia. Research, conducted at in-house laboratories and by extramural programs, focuses on enhancing our understanding of environmental phenomena. OAR's network consists of seven internal research laboratories, 30 Sea Grant university research programs, six undersea research centers, a research grants program through the Office of Global Programs, and 13 cooperative institutes with academia.

- **The Office of Program Planning and Integration**

The Office of Program Planning and Integration (PPI) is leading the implementation of NOAA's Strategic Vision. PPI is developing and updating NOAA's *Strategic Plan*, promoting the development of effective programs by integrating talent, resources, and capacity across NOAA, and managing designated programs using matrix principles.

- **The Office of Marine and Aviation Operations**

The mission of the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) is to manage, operate, and maintain the nation's largest civil fleet of research and survey ships and aircraft, which collect data for NOAA's environmental stewardship assessment and prediction programs. OMAO also manages NOAA's Dive Program and the NOAA Commissioned Corps, the nation's seventh uniformed service. The NOAA fleet supports a wide range of marine activities, including fisheries and coastal research, nautical charting, and long-range ocean and climate studies. NOAA's ships are specially equipped and designed to support the agency's programs, and have capabilities not found in the commercial fleet. Like the ships, NOAA aircraft are specially modified to carry instrument packages appropriate for NOAA's missions and are unique in their ability to support the agency's atmospheric and a wide range of other research programs. NOAA aircraft operate throughout the world, providing a wide range of research and survey capabilities, from weather research, hurricane surveillance, to snow pack surveys for flood prediction and water resource management, to coastline mapping for erosion studies, to marine mammal surveys.



**"In all things of nature, there is something of the marvelous."  
- Aristotle**

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