



Texas Legislature: How to Testify in Committee on SB147

Confirmed Hearing Details:

Thursday, March 2nd at 9am

Senate Chamber

[Hearing Notice](#)

**If you would like to testify in Chinese or a language other than English, email the State Affairs Committee Clerk at taryn.taylor_SC@senate.texas.gov to request a language interpreter!

SB147 - Anticipated Changes to the Bill on Thursday

Senator Kolkhorst's office has announced a number of amendments that will be presented Thursday at the committee hearing:

- Makes clear that the prohibitions do not apply to United States citizens and lawful permanent residents, including dual citizens.
- Prohibitions for real estate holdings will not include a residence that is homesteaded. This addresses concerns of those who have fled the authoritarian regimes to live the American dream and seek a home in Texas.
- Clarifies the definition of real estate as: land; an improvement; a mine or quarry; a mineral in place; or standing timber. This makes it clear that the bill ensures food, energy and national security are protected.
- Specifies that majority control of an entity means 50% or more voting control.
- Clarifies the enforcement mechanism. The Attorney General is given authority to investigate potential violations and then bring a divestment proceeding before a court of law. Once a judge finds the entity in violation, the court orders the real estate into receivership with existing receivership procedures under Chapter 64, Civil Practices and Civil Remedies being applied.

Note: even with these changes, this bill is discriminatory against people from China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia. These concessions do not negate the fact that this bill is rooted in racism and xenophobia. However, they will use these changes as an excuse to pass it in the Senate - make sure you speak out against this!

SB711

This bill will also be up for a hearing on Thursday, March 2nd and would effectively do the same thing as SB147. However instead of naming specific countries, it would create a ban for countries published in the Director of National Intelligence's Annual Threat Assessment. Currently this would include China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia. We would highly encourage you to consider testifying against SB711 as well. You would need to register to testify against this bill separately from SB147.



Providing verbal, in-person testimony at the Texas Capitol is one of the most effective ways for citizens to participate in and influence the legislative process. We've created this "How-To Testify" guide for people who want their voices heard and are eager to advocate for their community.

How the Committee Process Works

Once a bill is filed by an author, it is assigned to one of many committees, depending on the nature of the bill. It is during open committee hearings that the general public and subject matter experts are invited to share their perspectives and expertise that can help legislators understand the impact a bill could have on the lives of Texans.

Check the status of the bill on [Texas Legislature Online](#) by searching "SB147" to see if it's been scheduled for a hearing.

Providing In-Person Testimony

On the day of the hearing, the committee chair will call each bill as it comes up to be heard by the committee. After a bill is called and its bill author explains the bill, the chair will call out names of people who have registered to provide oral, in-person testimony, or "witnesses."

When your name is called as a witness, you will go up to the committee panel or podium, state *your name, who you represent, your position on the bill, and then provide your testimony.*

Preparing Your Testimony

First and foremost, it is important to note that there are time limits to each testimony. The chair will cut you off once your time has passed. *However, these time limitations are up to the discretion of the committee chair, as well as how many other witnesses have signed up to provide testimonies that day.*

You will have 2 minutes to testify on SB147.

Generally speaking, prepare your testimony to be read in two minutes or less. If you have more to say than what you can fit in two minutes, you can prepare two versions of your testimony: one oral and one written. The written testimony can be submitted to the committee and be as long as you like (be sure to print paper copies to hand over to the committee). The oral version of your testimony will be subject to time limitations.

Tips on how to create your testimony:

1. Write it down. Having a script is highly recommended, as it helps you navigate everything you want to say and how long it takes to say it.



**Those two or three minutes that you get to testify go by fast, so you should prepare notes — even if you know what you’re going to say because you may get asked questions by the committee.*

2. Opening:

- a. Greet the committee chairman and committee members
- b. State your name, the organization you are representing/if you’re there as an individual, and whether you’re testifying in support or opposition to the bill
**You should not waste any time with a long introduction. It’s important to be as brief as possible and get to the point.*

3. Main Messages:

- a. Summarize your reasons for your position **concisely**.
- b. Include brief examples of:
 - i. The problem (statistics/data or stories)
 - ii. How the bill would address the problem/how the bill creates a problem
**It should be an easy statement like, “I’m against the bill because it [insert data/personal story]. If passed, this bill would [insert harm it would create].”*
 - iii. Positive outcomes if the bill passes/negative outcomes if the bill passes
Or
 - iv. Positive outcomes if the bill does not pass/ negative outcomes if the bill does not pass
- c. Share your personal story. Talk about how the bill would impact your life, drawing on real, personal examples. If it’s a bill or issue that you have a personal experience with and you can point to a personal story about the bill that is directly related to the part of the law the bill changes, that is very helpful. It’s important to be specific about why the changes a certain bill proposes are a good idea or a bad idea.
- d. Make an explicit ask of the committee members to support/ oppose the bill.
**“I ask that you vote [for/against] this legislation.”*

4. Closing:

- a. Thank the committee members for their time
- b. Ask if there are any questions from the committee
**Most of the questions won’t be unfriendly, so take a minute to think about what the question is. Just because a question is being asked, that doesn’t mean the committee members disagree with you. They could be trying to support you.*
- c. Offer yourself and/or your organization as a resource.

While preparing your testimony, remember to always be:

- Concise. You will be subject to time limitations.
- Respectful. While you want to come across as passionate, be sure to avoid using combative language or tactics because remember you’re here to convince them to listen to you!



- Use data and evidence to support your position when possible. Providing hard facts makes it difficult for anyone to argue.
- Print copies of your testimony to submit to the committee the day of the hearing, along with copies of any supplemental documents your testimony may refer to, like any data, charts, or studies.
- Be yourself. You are here to provide your story and perspective and show how this will impact you. This committee process exists because legislators need to hear from people like you. No one should ever feel that they don't belong or shouldn't testify. It's everybody's first time to testify at some point.

Day of Your Testimony

Where and When to Arrive

Usually a committee will announce when they plan to hear a particular bill at least 48 hours in advance, but are only required to give 24 hours notice. These hearings can start as early as 8:00 AM or as late as 5:30 PM. You can check when and where your bill has been scheduled for a hearing on the [Texas Legislature Online website](#) by entering your bill number in the top right search bar.

A screenshot of the Texas Legislature Online Bill Lookup page. The page has a dark blue header with the text 'Texas Legislature Online Bill Lookup' and navigation links: Home, My TLO, House, Senate, Legislation, Search, Committees, Calendars. On the right side of the header, there are links for Help, FAQ, Site Map, Contact, and Login, along with session information: 'House: Adjourned until Tue, Feb 21, 2023 2:00 pm' and 'Senate: Adjourned until Tue, Feb 21, 2023 11:00 am'. Below the header is a search bar with a dropdown menu for 'Bill: 88R' and a 'GO' button. The main content area includes a search form with a text input for 'Bill Number', a dropdown for 'Legislature: 88(R) - 2023', and a dropdown for 'Information Type: History'. There are 'Submit' and 'Reset' buttons. To the right of the search form is a 'Tips on Finding A Bill' section with three numbered tips. Below that is a 'Document Formats' section with a link to 'Get Adobe Reader'. At the bottom of the page is a footer with navigation links: Home | My TLO | House | Senate | Legislation | Search | Committees | Calendars | Policies | RSS Feeds | Top.

Once you're on the bill page, look for its assigned Senate committee roughly halfway down the page and click the hyperlink. This will take you to the public notice for the hearing in which your bill will be with the time and room number.



Bill: SB 1

Legislative Session: 88(R)

Last Action: 02/21/2023 S Scheduled for public hearing on . . .

Caption Version: Introduced
Caption Text: General Appropriations Bill.

Author: Huffman

Subjects: State Finances--Appropriations (I0746)

Senate Committee: [Finance](#)
Status: In committee

Actions: (descending date order)

	Description	Comment	Date ▼	Time	Journal Page
S	Scheduled for public hearing on . . .		02/21/2023		
S	Left pending in committee		02/16/2023		
S	Testimony taken in committee		02/16/2023		
S	Considered in public hearing		02/16/2023		
S	Scheduled for public hearing on . . .		02/16/2023		
S	Left pending in committee		02/15/2023		
S	Testimony taken in committee		02/15/2023		
S	Considered in public hearing		02/15/2023		
S	Scheduled for public hearing on . . .		02/15/2023		
S	Left pending in committee		02/14/2023		

Keep in mind, each committee creates its own rules and processes for hearing testimony so when in doubt, be sure to sign up for Asian Texans for Justice’s email alerts to stay up to date on where a bill is!

First: Register to Testify

In order to orally share your testimony, you must first register to testify as a witness. You may only register to testify **on the day a bill is scheduled** to be heard by the assigned committee. You can register at a kiosk/iPad, which are usually located in the hallway between the main concourse and legislator offices in the Capitol Extension (the E Floors). You cannot register in advance but you may register from your personal iPad/phone if you are on-site and connected to the Public-Capitol WiFi network.

Since this bill is assigned to the Senate State Affairs committee, you will not be able to digitally register for your hearing. In those cases, you may have to manually register by filling out a physical card in the committee room your hearing has been assigned to. Staff members from ATJ will be in the building to help you register.

Second: Get Comfortable, Wait, and Be Ready at a Moments Notice

Each committee makes its own rules regarding the order in which each bill will be heard and in what order they will call witnesses. Sometimes bills will be called according to seniority of its authors, while other times it’s “first come, first served” with bill authors lining up in the committee



hearing to lay out their bills. *Often, bills with a lot of registered witnesses will be held last, in hopes that some registered witnesses have to leave before their bill gets called.*

If You Must Leave Before You Are Called

We know that testifying can require a substantial investment of your time. Not everyone will have the ability to stay at the Capitol until their name is called to testify. In these cases, it's always good to bring multiple copies of your testimony; you can always submit these written versions to the committee clerk if you must leave. Written testimony will still be considered by the committee and is usually read later by their office staff.

For those who do not have time to submit a verbal or written testimony, you can always simply state your position on a bill, also known as “dropping a card,” at a kiosk the day of the committee hearing. This registers your position but will not have a corresponding oral or written testimony.

What should I bring with me?

- If you have any documents to share with the committee (your written testimony, data, reports, etc), you will need 25 copies of each to give to the committee clerk.
- Bring chargers for any of your electronics. We also recommend you bring your electronic devices fully charged.
- Bring water bottles, refreshments and/or snacks. There is a cafeteria at the Capitol open from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. After it is closed, you will be on your own for food. You don't know how long you may have to wait, so bring things to stay nourished, hydrated, and near your committee room.
- Bring something to do while waiting to testify. Remember, there is public WiFi at the Capitol.

Where to Park

Parking can be found in the Capitol Visitors Parking Garage on 1201 San Jacinto Blvd, Austin, TX 78701 for a fee.

What to Wear

There is no formal dress code at the Capitol. Legislators and legislative staff generally wear business attire, so it always helps to look professional.

Talking Points

- *Why do we need to push back against this bill?*



- In Texas, we #knowourworth. From Dallas to Sugar Land, from the Gulf Coast to the Panhandle, we know we're stronger when we join together.
 - Whether we've moved here recently or many years ago, we all deserve the freedom to move and the freedom to give our families a better life.
 - Instead of making Texas a welcoming place for all – where people of all races and ethnicities can make our communities better through hard work and local entrepreneurship – politicians are trying to take away our freedom to leave a better life for future generations.
 - Whether we are Chinese or Iranian, Latino or Korean, Black or white, we are coming together as Texans to expose the real story behind SB 147 and call on our elected representatives to #protectourfreedom.
- *Why is this bill alarming?*
 - It names specific nationalities, the majority of which are Asian countries. This is rooted in xenophobia and racism.
 - This bill repeats dark periods of history where people of Asian descent were discriminated against, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act - where a series of laws prohibited people of Asian descent from buying land.
 - It unfairly penalizes individuals and conflates them with government entities. Many Iranians and North Koreans in the U.S. are made up of those who are fleeing their government.
 - It creates barriers to economic development in Texas for individuals who contribute to our state through labor, entrepreneurship, and innovation.
 - Holding individuals accountable for the geopolitical actions of the country they came from is a dangerous precedent. Should SB 147 pass, it will inevitably lead to further encroachment on people's freedom.
 - It threatens the Texas economy by creating undue barriers for individuals who contribute to our state through labor, innovation, and entrepreneurship

Additional Talking Points

- America is *supposed* to be the land of the free and the home of the brave.
- But today, a handful of politicians in our state want to divide us, based on what we look like and where we come from, while they take away our freedom to build a life, to learn, and to put food on the table for our families.
- These politicians are trying to take away our freedom to leave a better life for future generations – by saying certain Texans shouldn't be allowed to own land or property. This is a cornerstone of the American Dream.
- SB 147 hurts the economic future of our state and our freedom to thrive as Texans.
- Texans of Asian descent should have the freedom to pursue their American Dream just like anyone else. SB147 will effectively stop them from having that dream.



- By working together, we can rewrite the rules here in Texas to ensure everyone can thrive, whether we are Chinese or Iranian, Latino or Korean, we all deserve to call this state home.

Sample Script

Hello, my name is [insert name], representing [myself / name of your organization], and I oppose SB147.

[Why do we need to push back against this bill? Present a positive vision of why people of Asian descent would choose to immigrate to Texas.] Whether we've moved here recently or many years ago, we all deserve the freedom to move and the freedom to give our families a better life. But today, a handful of politicians in our state want to divide us, based on what we look like and where we come from, while they take away our freedom to build a better life for our children.

[Why do you think this is a bad bill? Use data, historical knowledge, and other facts that cannot be disputed.] SB147 is legislation that blatantly discriminates against people of Asian descent. We have experienced dark periods of American history where laws like The Chinese Exclusion Act and The Page Act led to xenophobia and racism against all Asian people. While this bill currently names four countries, this is a slippery slope for further discrimination against additional groups of people.

[How would this impact you directly or indirectly? How would this impact Texas?] If passed, SB147 would have dire impacts on people who live and work in Texas today. The legislation does not clarify how it would impact permanent residents, H1-B visa holders, and those who are seeking asylum from oppressive governments. Many North Koreans in the U.S. are made up of those who are fleeing their government. Instead of supporting their transition into our democratic process, we are creating new hurdles for them once they've arrived here.

[Share your personal stories.]

In closing, I ask that all members of this committee vote no on SB147. I'd like to thank Chairman Hughes and the members of this committee for your time. I am now open to questions.