



National Environmental Justice Advisory Council Guidelines for Public Comment Sessions

What is the NEJAC's Authority to Hold Public Comment Sessions?

The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) is a federal advisory committee that was established by charter on September 30, 1993, to provide independent advice, consultation and recommendations to the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on matters related to environmental justice. Under this charter and the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) regulations, the NEJAC is authorized to conduct public comment sessions to obtain formal input from individuals or representatives of organizations concerned about environmental justice issues.

What is the Purpose of the NEJAC's Public Comment Sessions?

The purpose of the public comment sessions is to establish a forum for open dialogue and to allow members of the public the opportunity to speak directly to the NEJAC about environmental justice issues, ideas, and concerns. Through this process, the NEJAC hopes to gain a better understanding of the problems and issues deemed important to the public.

Who Can Give Public Comment?

Any member of the public can give public comment to the NEJAC, either as an individual or as a representative of specific interest groups. Public commenters can file a written statement with the NEJAC or speak during the public comment sessions at NEJAC meetings.

While there is no legal prohibition against it, NEJAC policy has established that it will NOT receive comments from current members of the **NEJAC Executive Council or representatives of EPA.**

How is the Public Comment Process Conducted?

The NEJAC takes its responsibility to listen to and learn from the public very seriously and tries to implement an open, fair, respectful and equitable public comment process. For each public comment session, the Chair of the NEJAC Executive Council will begin the session by calling on the commenters who have signed up in advance to present comment. After each has had an opportunity to speak, the Chair will ask whether any other individual wishes to speak. (See "Speaker's Template")

To be respectful of everyone and to accommodate the large number of people who want to address the NEJAC, comments are limited to **no more than** seven (7) minutes. However, the allotted time period can be increased **ONLY** when there are a smaller number of speakers than expected, and if time is available. It is the Council's policy to continue a public comment session until the last person has had an opportunity to speak.

Members of the NEJAC Executive Council are asked to limit their responses to commenters to requests for clarification or to reinforce issues raised during public comment sessions. NEJAC members are requested to limit their responses to **no more than** (2) minutes to allow commenters the maximum amount of time available.

How is the Order of Speakers Determined?

While the order of speakers is determined as much as possible in advance using the criteria described below, modifications can occur at the meeting to accommodate changes in circumstances. The list of public commenters is posted at every NEJAC meeting at the registration desk. The following criteria are considered in determining the order of speakers for each public comment session:

1. Time of request:
First come, first serve basis as much as possible. For example, commenters who pre-register will speak before those who sign up at the meeting.
2. Geographic distribution:
Commenters from local areas versus those from distant locations.
3. Affiliation:
One representative from an organization versus multiple representatives from the same organization. If time permits, multiple representatives from the same organization can provide comment at the end of the session.

Are Written Materials Required?

Commenters are encouraged to submit any background materials they think will help the Council better understand their issues. However, commenters are requested to bring written materials when speaking to the NEJAC.

How Can I Bring Issues to the Council if I Don't Want to Speak or I Can't Attend the Meeting?

For participants who choose not to make verbal comments or who cannot attend the meetings, a written statement can be submitted to be added to the record.

