

## **Texas Access to Justice Commission Proposed Policy on Comments from the Public**

### **Informing Members of the Public About Commission Meetings**

The Commission encourages members of the public to attend (either in person, virtually or by telephone) Commission meetings. Commission meeting notices should be prominently displayed on the Commission's website and other places as the Commission deems appropriate. The Commission may also consider sending meeting notices to any of the following:

- Legal aid organizations in Texas;
- Pro bono organizations in Texas; and
- Law schools in Texas

Commission meeting notices should include the time and location of the meeting and information on how a member of the public can attend the meeting via video conference or by telephone.

The Commission should also add a public comments "button" to the Commission website to allow members of the public to communicate with Commission staff.

### **Public Comments at Commission Meetings**

Subject to the following provisions, the general public will be allowed a reasonable opportunity to appear before the Commission at each Commission meeting and to speak on any issue under the jurisdiction of the Commission. The Commission will hear comments from the members of the public at the beginning and at the end of each Commission meeting.

(A) A member of the public wishing to address the Commission must sign in on a public comment registration card provided at the meeting or with the notice of the meeting stating their name, contact information, whether they are an attorney or a member of the public, the topic upon which they wish to speak, and whether they wish to speak for or against a particular action item on the Commission's agenda.

(B) The Chair has the discretion to set reasonable limits on the number of presentations allowed during the public comments portion of the Commission meeting. The Chair also has the discretion to set reasonable time limits for each member of the public's presentation provided that the allotted time limitations on each public presentation are applied equally. The Chair is encouraged to allow up to five minutes per presentation. The Chair has the authority to ask any member of the public to conclude their remarks if it becomes necessary to do so.

(C) Members of the public who participate by videoconference or telephone will be muted until the Chair calls on them to make their comments to the Commission. All members of the public will be muted while the Commission is conducting its regular business.

(D) If there are two or more members of the public who wish to address the Commission on a common issue and to express a common position on the issue, the Chair shall have the discretion to request them to allow one spokesperson to address the Commission with respect to the common issue.

(E) Unless submitted in advance and approved by the Chair before the meeting begins, presentations made by members of the public may not include any audio/visual components including, but not limited to, computer-based presentations, videos or recordings.

(F) Public members may submit written comments for the Commission regardless of whether they speak at the meeting.

(G) As a general rule, members of the public should not interrupt or address any discussion of the Commission that is occurring during Commission meetings that are not part of the public comments sessions. The Chair is authorized to ask any member of the public who attempts to speak during the Commission meeting to hold their comments until the public comments session at the end of the meeting.