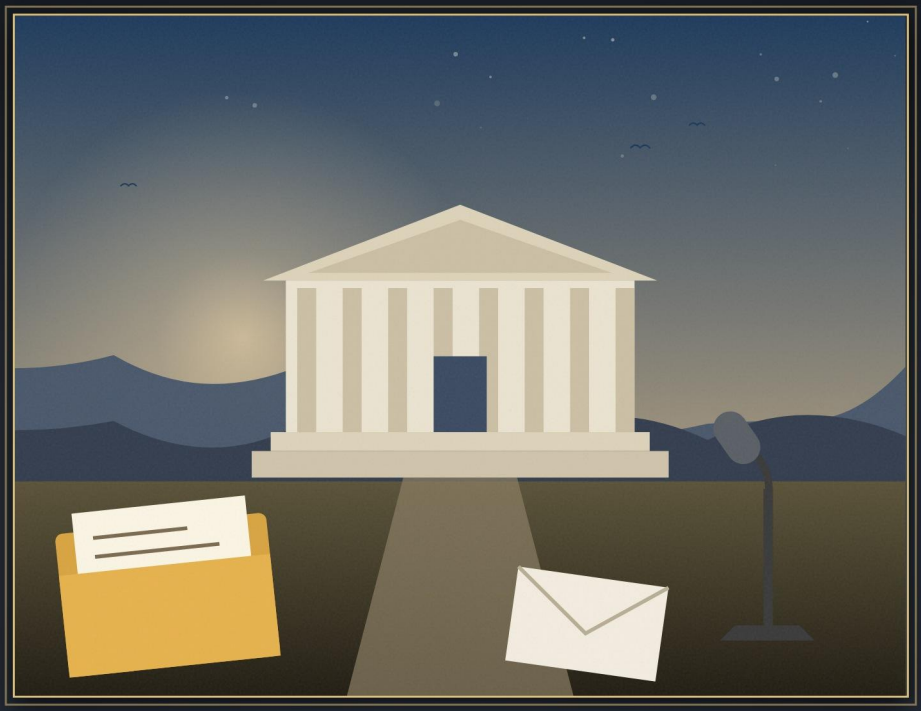
A STEP-BY-STEP CIVICS GUIDE

Getting Answers From Your Government

Ask for Records. Speak Up. Be Heard.



Public Records, Public Comment and Testifying in Nevada

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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Getting Answers From Your Government: Public Records, Public Comment and Testifying in Nevada

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Questions and corrections: andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com

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Before You Begin

Government in this country belongs to the people it serves. That is not just a nice saying. It is written into law. Federal law gives any person the right to ask for federal agency records. Nevada law says public records must be open to inspection by any person, and that the law must be read broadly in favor of access. Nevada's Open Meeting Law says public bodies exist to help the people do their business, and that their actions and deliberations must be taken openly.

Most people never use these rights. They do not know how, or they think it takes a lawyer. It does not. A records request is a letter. Public comment is three minutes at a microphone. You can weigh in on a bill without driving to Carson City. This mini book shows you how, step by step.

What This Book Covers

- Asking a federal agency for records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Asking a Nevada state or local agency for records under the Nevada Public Records Act.
- How Nevada's Open Meeting Law works, and how to give public comment at a county commission, city council or school board meeting.
- Following and speaking up on bills in the 2027 Nevada Legislature.
- Writing to your legislator and your members of Congress.

The back of the book has sample letters you can copy and a log for keeping track of your requests.

The Date This Book Stops At

The facts in this book were checked against official sources as of November 18, 2026. The Nevada Legislature meets again starting February 1, 2027, and may change the records and meeting laws. Check the current law on the Legislature's website before you count on a deadline.

A Word on Tone I have led teams and projects for a long time, and I have sat on both sides of the table. The people behind the counter at a county office are usually your neighbors, and many of them are stretched thin. Be clear, be polite and be persistent. You will get more answers with a friendly, specific letter than with an angry one. And keep a copy of everything.

Chapter 1: Start With the Right Question

Before you file anything, figure out three things: what you want to know, who has it, and which law applies. Ten minutes of thinking here can save you weeks of waiting.

What Do You Want?

There is a difference between a question and a record. *Why did the county approve that subdivision?* is a question. Agencies are not required by records laws to answer questions or create new documents. *The staff report and the minutes for the meeting where the county approved that subdivision* is a request for records. They have to give you those, unless the law makes them confidential.

Turn your question into a list of documents. Ask yourself what papers, emails, maps, contracts, reports, recordings or spreadsheets would answer it.

Who Has It?

Records belong to the agency that made or keeps them. Some examples:

What you want	Who likely has it
Road repair schedule on a county road	County public works department
Your child's school district budget	The school district
Police report on a crash	The sheriff or police department that responded
State agency contract	That state agency
Federal land permit	The federal agency that issued it
Your own Social Security or veterans records	That federal agency

Which Law Applies?

- **Federal agencies** (for example the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Environmental Protection Agency): the federal Freedom of Information Act.
- **Nevada state agencies, counties, cities, school districts and other local governments:** the Nevada Public Records Act, NRS Chapter 239.
- **Meetings of Nevada public bodies**, such as a county commission, city council, school board or state board: the Nevada Open Meeting Law, NRS Chapter 241.

Try Asking First

Much of what people want is already online: agendas, minutes, budgets, meeting videos, contracts and reports. Check the agency's website first. Then call or email the office and simply ask. Many times a clerk will send it the same day. If that does not work, or if you want a formal record of your request, use the steps in this book.

Keep a Log Every time you ask for something, write down the date, the agency, the person, what you asked for and how you sent it. A log is at the back of this book. When a deadline passes, your log shows it.

Chapter 2: Federal Records: The Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act, called FOIA, gives the public the right to ask for records from federal executive branch agencies. The government's FOIA website, FOIA.gov, says generally any person, United States citizen or not, can make a request.

What FOIA Covers

FOIA covers records of federal agencies, such as cabinet departments and their offices, and independent agencies. It does not cover Congress, the federal courts, or state and local governments. For Nevada state and local records, use the Nevada Public Records Act in Chapter 4.

What Agencies Can Hold Back

FOIA.gov lists nine exemptions that let an agency withhold information:

1. Classified national security information.
2. Internal personnel rules and practices.
3. Information another federal law bars from release.
4. Trade secrets and confidential business or financial information.
5. Privileged communications inside or between agencies.
6. Information that would invade someone's personal privacy.
7. Certain law enforcement records.
8. Information about the supervision of financial institutions.
9. Geological information about wells.

An agency should release the parts of a record that are not exempt. Expect to see some black boxes. That is normal, and you can challenge it on appeal.

How Long It Takes

By law, a federal agency has 20 working days (not counting weekends and federal holidays) to decide on a request, and it can take up to 10 more working days in unusual circumstances, with written notice to you (5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6)). In practice, many agencies have backlogs and take longer. FOIA.gov says agencies generally process requests in the order they are received, and that the time depends on how complex the request is and how many requests are ahead of it. A narrow, clear request moves faster.

What It Costs

There is no fee to file a FOIA request. Agencies may charge for search time and copies. FOIA.gov says there is usually no charge for the first two hours of search time or the first 100 pages of copies. You can state the most you are willing to pay, and the agency must tell you if fees will be higher.

You can ask for a fee waiver if releasing the records is in the public interest and not mainly for your own business use. FOIA.gov notes that not being able to pay is not by itself a reason for a waiver, and requests for your own records usually do not qualify.

When You Need It Fast

You may ask for expedited processing if a delay could threaten someone's life or physical safety, or if there is an urgent need to inform the public and you are mainly in the business of sharing information, such as a reporter. Explain why in your request.

Records About Yourself

If you are asking for records about yourself, the agency will ask you to prove who you are, with a notarized statement or a statement signed under penalty of perjury. Many agencies have their own forms for this. For some records, like a veteran's military file or your own Social Security earnings, the agency has a simpler process outside FOIA, so check its website first.

Chapter 3: Writing a FOIA Request and Appealing

A FOIA request does not need a special form. FOIA.gov says it must be in writing and reasonably describe the records you want. Here is how to write one that gets results.

Step 1: Find the Agency's FOIA Office

Go to FOIA.gov and search for the agency. The site lists each agency's FOIA office and contact information, and you can send many requests through FOIA.gov itself, the National FOIA Portal. Most agencies also take requests by web form, email or fax. Large departments often have separate FOIA offices for each part, so send your request to the part most likely to have the records.

Step 2: Describe the Records

Be specific. Give names, dates, places, file numbers and subjects. Compare these two:

- Too broad: all records about wild horses in Nevada.
- Better: the final gather plan and any population survey reports for one named herd management area, from January 1, 2025, to the present.

The better request can be searched in an afternoon. The broad one may take years, or come back as thousands of pages you have to pay for.

Step 3: Add the Practical Details

- Your name, mailing address, phone and email.
- The format you want, such as electronic copies by email.
- The most you are willing to pay in fees, or a request for a fee waiver with your reasons.

- A request for expedited processing, if you qualify, with your reasons.

A sample letter is at the back of this book.

Step 4: Track It

The agency should send you an acknowledgment with a tracking number. Write it in your log. If you have questions or the request stalls, FOIA.gov says you can contact the agency's FOIA Public Liaison, a person whose job is to help requesters.

Step 5: If the Answer Is No

If the agency withholds records, denies a fee waiver, or says it found nothing and you believe more exists, you can appeal. FOIA.gov says to send a letter or email to the agency's appeal authority, and there is no fee. The agency's response letter should tell you where to send the appeal and the deadline. Federal law gives you at least 90 days from the date of the agency's decision to appeal, and the agency then has 20 working days to decide the appeal (5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6)). Do not wait until the last week.

In your appeal letter, include the tracking number, a copy of the decision and a plain explanation of why you think it is wrong. For example: the agency withheld whole pages when only names needed to be blacked out, or the search missed an office that would have the records.

Step 6: Free Mediation

FOIA.gov says that after the appeal, you can ask the Office of Government Information Services, part of the National Archives, to mediate. Its staff help requesters and agencies resolve disputes without going to court. The last step, a lawsuit in federal court, is beyond the scope of this book.

Department of Justice Guidance The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Information Policy, at justice.gov/oip, oversees how agencies follow FOIA and publishes guides and training. If you want to understand an exemption in depth, its Guide to the Freedom of Information Act is the standard reference.

Chapter 4: The Nevada Public Records Act

Nevada's public records law is in Chapter 239 of the Nevada Revised Statutes. It applies to state agencies and to local governments: counties, cities, school districts and other public bodies. It is a strong law, and it is written in your favor.

The Starting Point: Records Are Open

The law begins by saying its purpose is to give people prompt access to inspect, copy or receive copies of public books and records. It says the law must be read liberally, and any limits on access must be read narrowly (NRS 239.001).

Unless a record has been declared confidential by law, public records must be open at all times during office hours to inspection by any person (NRS 239.010). The Nevada Attorney General's office teaches agencies that records are presumed public unless confidentiality applies.

You Can Ask in Writing or Out Loud

Nevada law covers both written and oral requests (NRS 239.0107). You can walk up to a counter and ask. A written request is still better, because it starts a clear paper trail and a clear deadline. State agencies must post a request form on their websites, but you are not limited to that form.

The Five-Business-Day Rule

By the end of the fifth business day after the agency receives your request, it must do one of these (NRS 239.0107):

- Let you inspect or copy the record, or give you a copy.

- Tell you in writing that it does not have the record, and, if it knows, who does.
- Tell you in writing that it cannot produce the record in five days, give the earliest date it expects to have it, and explain why. If your request is very broad, it must help you narrow it.
- Tell you in writing that it is denying the request because the record is confidential, and cite the specific law that makes it so.

Five business days does not always mean records in five days. It means an answer in five days. But a silent agency is breaking the law.

Confidential Records

Nevada has many specific laws that make certain records confidential, such as some personnel, medical, juvenile and law enforcement records, and personal identifiers like Social Security numbers. Where there is no specific law, the courts use a balancing test, and the government must show its interest in keeping a record secret outweighs the public's interest in seeing it (NRS 239.0113). The agency carries that burden, not you.

An agency cannot refuse to release a whole record just because part of it is confidential, if the confidential part can be separated or blacked out (NRS 239.010).

Electronic Copies

If you ask, the agency must give you a copy in an electronic format, with some exceptions, such as when no electronic version exists. It cannot refuse to give you the format you ask for just because it prefers a different one (NRS 239.010).

Fees

An agency may charge the actual cost of providing the copy, such as paper, toner, media and postage. Costs the agency would have anyway are not supposed to be included (NRS 239.005 and 239.052). The Attorney General's training notes that for very large, demanding requests, some labor costs may be charged. Agencies must keep a list of their fees posted in their offices (NRS 239.052). Copies of a public body's meeting minutes or audio recordings are free on request (NRS 241.035).

Looking at records in person is often free. If you only need to see something once, ask to inspect it instead of buying copies.

Old Records

If a record has been held by a government agency for at least 30 years, you may ask the court to let you see it even if it was once confidential, with some exceptions. For a record about a person, the wait is 30 years or until the person has died, whichever is later (NRS 239.0115).

2025 Changes The 2025 Legislature made some records public, such as candidates' declarations of candidacy and proof of residency, made some others confidential, such as information identifying donors, members or volunteers of a nonprofit, and created a Public Records Task Force to study exemptions, fees and how disputes are resolved. The 2027 Legislature may act on what the task force recommends.

Chapter 5: Making a Nevada Records Request

Here is the process from start to finish, using a county as the example. The same steps work for a city, a school district or a state agency.

Step 1: Look Online and Call

Many counties post agendas, minutes, budgets, meeting video and ordinances. Search the site. Then call the clerk's office or the department and ask. Sometimes a five-minute phone call ends the search.

Step 2: Write the Request

Address it to the agency's records official or public records contact, if it has one. State agencies must name one. Many counties and cities name one on their website, often the clerk. Include:

- A line saying this is a request under the Nevada Public Records Act, NRS Chapter 239.
- A clear description of the records, with dates and subjects.
- The format you want, such as electronic copies by email.
- A request to be told the fees in advance if they will be more than a set amount.
- Your name and how to reach you.

You do not need to say why you want the records. A sample letter is at the back of this book.

Step 3: Send It and Mark the Calendar

Email is fine and gives you a time stamp. Count five business days, not counting the day it was received, weekends or holidays, and write the date in your log.

Step 4: Read the Response

If you get records, check that they match what you asked for. If the agency says it needs more time, note its estimated date. If it denies part of the request, look for the specific law it cites. A denial with no legal citation does not meet the law (NRS 239.0107).

Step 5: If You Are Denied or Ignored

Start friendly. Write back, point to the law and ask the agency to reconsider. Many problems are mistakes, not cover-ups. If that does not work, Nevada law lets you file a petition in the district court in the county where the records are, if your request was denied, unreasonably delayed, or charged an excessive or improper fee (NRS 239.011). The court must give the case priority over other civil cases. If you win, you can recover your court costs and reasonable attorney's fees.

A court that finds an agency willfully broke the law can fine the agency $1,000 for a first violation, $5,000 for a second and $10,000 for a third or later violation within 10 years, according to the Attorney General's 2026 training on the law (NRS 239.340).

For a big or important dispute, talk to a lawyer before you go to court. Groups that work on government transparency and press freedom sometimes help.

A Few Tips From Experience

- Ask for specific records, not "everything."

- Ask for date ranges.
- Ask for the records in the form they are kept, such as a spreadsheet instead of a printout.
- If a request is large, offer to receive records in batches.
- Say thank you. The clerk will remember you next time.

Chapter 6: Open Meetings in Nevada

Nevada's Open Meeting Law, NRS Chapter 241, says public bodies exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business, and their actions and deliberations must be taken openly. It applies to state and local boards, commissions and councils, from the Board of County Commissioners to a town advisory board.

What Counts as a Meeting

A meeting happens when a quorum, usually a simple majority of the members, gathers to deliberate or act on something the body oversees. The Attorney General's office warns that this can happen by email, and that a series of smaller conversations passed from member to member, sometimes called a walking quorum, can also count as a meeting. A public body cannot decide things in a back room and then vote without discussion in public.

Notice and the Agenda

A public body must post a written notice and agenda no later than 9 a.m. on the third working day before the meeting (NRS 241.020). The agenda must give a clear and complete statement of each topic, and items the body may vote on must be marked *for possible action*. The body generally cannot act on something that is not on the agenda.

The notice must be posted at the body's office or meeting place, on its website and on the State of Nevada's public notice website, and sent to anyone who has asked for it. Ask to be put on the list for any body you want to follow.

Public Comment

Every agenda must include public comment and say how it will be taken (NRS 241.020). A body can hold a general comment period, usually at the start and again before it adjourns, or take comment on each action item before the vote. Either way there must be a general comment period before the meeting ends. The body may set reasonable limits on time, place and manner, such as three minutes per speaker. A person who willfully disrupts a meeting can be removed.

Remote Comment

Since the 2025 changes to the law, the Attorney General's training says a body must offer a remote way to give public comment only when there is no physical location open to the public. Many bodies still take comments by email or phone. Check the agenda.

Minutes and Recordings

The body must keep written minutes and, for most bodies, an audio recording. The law says minutes or an audio recording must be available for the public to inspect within 30 working days after the meeting adjourns, and a copy must be given to you on request at no charge (NRS 241.035).

If You Think the Law Was Broken

You can file a complaint with the Nevada Attorney General's office, which can investigate and prosecute violations. The Attorney General's office publishes an Open Meeting Law Manual and a complaint form on its website, ag.nv.gov. Action taken in violation of the law can be declared void by a court. The deadlines are short. As of the 2025 law, the Attorney General must investigate and prosecute a violation alleged in a complaint filed within 120 days after the violation (NRS 241.039). A lawsuit to

make a body follow the law must be filed within 120 days after the action you object to, and a lawsuit to have an action declared void within 60 days (NRS 241.037). Act quickly, and check the current rules on the Attorney General's site.

Watch a Meeting First Before you speak, watch one meeting of the body online or in person. Notice how the chair runs public comment, where people sign in, and how long speakers get. You will be much more comfortable when it is your turn.

Chapter 7: Speaking at Local Meetings

Most of the decisions that touch your daily life are made close to home: roads, zoning, water, parks, law enforcement budgets and schools. Those decisions are made by county commissions, city councils and school boards, and every one of them must take public comment.

Who Decides What

Body	Decides things like
Board of County Commissioners	County budget, roads, zoning outside cities, county services
City council	City budget, streets, zoning and services inside the city
School district board of trustees	School budget, calendar, policies, superintendent
Advisory boards	Recommendations to the commission on local issues
Special districts	Water, sewer, fire or other services in their area

An Example: Lyon County

Dayton is in Lyon County, which is a good example of how local government works in much of rural Nevada. Dayton is not an incorporated city, so its local decisions are made by the Lyon County Board of County Commissioners. Fernley and Yerington are the county's two incorporated cities and have their own city councils.

Lyon County also has citizen advisory boards for its communities. The county's handbook for these boards, revised May 1, 2025,

says they help identify issues important to their communities and carry information between the Board of County Commissioners and the public, on subjects like land development, rezoning, road maintenance, animal control and parks. They are advisory only. The commissioners keep all decision-making authority. The boards meet under the Open Meeting Law and take public comment at the start and end of each meeting, with three minutes per speaker.

A citizen advisory board meeting is a good first place to speak. It is smaller and friendlier, and what you say is passed on to the commissioners.

How to Prepare

1. Find the agenda. Read the item you care about and any staff report attached to it.
2. Decide whether to speak during general public comment or on the specific item.
3. Write out what you will say. Time yourself. Three minutes is about 350 to 400 spoken words.
4. Bring copies of any handout for each member and the clerk.
5. If you cannot attend, check whether the body takes written comments by email before the meeting, and send yours in time to be included in the record.

At the Meeting

Sign in or fill out a speaker card if the body uses them. When your name is called, go to the microphone. State your name, and your town if they ask. Speak to the chair and the board, not the audience. Stay on your topic, and stop when your time is up.

What to Say

The best public comments are short and specific. Here is a simple shape:

1. Who you are and why you care. One sentence.
2. What you are asking for. One sentence.
3. Two or three facts or experiences that support it.
4. Thank them, and repeat what you are asking for.

A sample public comment is at the back of this book.

Do Not Expect an Answer Right Then

Boards usually do not respond during public comment, because the Open Meeting Law generally keeps them from deliberating or acting on topics that are not on the agenda. Silence does not mean they were not listening. If you want a response, follow up with an email to the member or ask that the item be placed on a future agenda.

> **Respect Wins** I have stood in front of rooms where people were angry, and I have learned that the calm, prepared speaker is the one who gets remembered. You can disagree strongly and still be respectful. Board members are your neighbors too.

Chapter 8: The 2027 Nevada Legislature

Nevada has a citizen Legislature. Its 63 members, 21 senators and 42 Assembly members, meet in Carson City for 120 days every other year, in odd-numbered years. The 84th Session begins on February 1, 2027. Hundreds of bills will be introduced, heard, changed, passed or left to die in those four months, and every one of them is open to public comment.

How a Bill Moves

1. A legislator, a committee or certain state and local agencies ask the Legislature's legal staff to draft a bill. The request is called a bill draft request.
2. The bill is introduced in the Senate or the Assembly, given a number such as SB 123 or AB 45, and sent to a committee.
3. The committee holds a public hearing, where the public can speak. Then it may pass the bill, change it or let it sit.
4. The whole house debates and votes.
5. The bill goes to the other house and repeats the process.
6. If both houses pass the same version, it goes to the Governor to sign or veto.

The committee hearing is where ordinary citizens have the most influence. By the time a bill reaches the floor, most of the decisions have been made.

Finding Bills: NELIS

The Legislature's bill system is the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System, or NELIS, on the Legislature's website at leg.state.nv.us. The Legislature describes it as its site for finding

and tracking bills, bill draft requests and budgets. In NELIS you can:

- Search bills by number, topic or sponsor.
- Read the bill text and every amendment.
- See which committee has the bill and when it will be heard.
- Read the committee agendas, meeting minutes and exhibits.
- See how each member voted.
- Sign up for tracking, so you can follow the bills you care about.

Reading a Bill

Nevada bills start with a Legislative Counsel's Digest, a plain summary of what the bill does. Read that first. In the bill text, new language and language being removed are marked differently, and the bill explains the marks at the top. Read the fiscal note too, if there is one. It estimates what the bill will cost.

The Opinion Poll

The Legislature's website has an online Opinion Poll, at leg.state.nv.us/assembly/opinionpoll, where you can say whether you support or oppose a bill. It takes two minutes and needs no trip to Carson City. It is a quick way to be counted, but a personal comment to the committee or your own legislator carries more weight.

Deadlines Matter

The Legislature publishes a 120-day calendar of deadlines during the session, such as the last days for bills to pass committees and each house. A bill that misses a deadline usually dies. If you care about a bill, watch for its hearing early in the session. Agendas are posted ahead of each hearing, and you may have only a few days' notice.

Try This Before February Look up who represents you in the Nevada Senate and Assembly. The Legislature's Find Your Legislators tool, at leg.state.nv.us/whosmylegislator, looks them up by address. The Legislature's main phone line is (775) 684-6800. Write their names, email addresses and phone numbers on the worksheet at the back of this book.

Chapter 9: Testifying on a Bill

Testifying sounds formal, but it is just public comment in front of a legislative committee. Committee members want to hear from the people a bill will affect. A nurse, a rancher, a parent or a small business owner with a real story often makes more of an impression than a paid lobbyist.

Ways to Be Heard

- **In person** at the Legislative Building in Carson City.
- **Remotely by phone or video**, when the committee offers it. The hearing agenda explains how to sign up.
- **In writing**, by sending written testimony to the committee before the hearing so it becomes part of the record.
- **Through the Opinion Poll** on the Legislature's website.

The ways to take part can change from session to session. The agenda for each hearing is the final word on how that committee is taking public comment, so read it closely.

Step 1: Find the Hearing

In NELIS, open the bill and look for its committee and hearing date. Open the committee agenda for that day. It lists the bills in order, the time, the room, and how to give public comment.

Step 2: Sign Up

Follow the agenda's instructions to sign up. Committees usually ask you to say whether you are speaking in support, in opposition or neutral. If you are testifying remotely, sign up early, because remote slots and deadlines can close before the hearing starts.

Step 3: Write What You Will Say

Committees often limit each speaker to two or three minutes, especially on busy bills. Write it out:

1. Your name, where you live, and whether you support or oppose the bill, with the bill number.
2. Who you are in relation to the bill, in one sentence.
3. Your main point, with one real example.
4. What you are asking the committee to do: pass it, amend it, or stop it.
5. Thank them.

If someone before you already made your point, it is fine to say you agree with the speakers before you and add one new point.

Step 4: Send Written Testimony Too

Send a written copy to the committee, following the instructions on the agenda, so it goes into the record even if time runs out. You can include facts and details there that you do not have time to say out loud.

Step 5: At the Hearing

Address the chair first, with *Chair and members of the committee*. Speak slowly. Do not read too fast to fit more in. Stay calm if a member asks you a question. It is perfectly fine to say you do not know but will find out and send the answer.

Step 6: Follow Up

After the hearing, send a short thank-you email to the committee members, especially your own legislator if they sit on the committee. Then keep watching the bill in NELIS. If it passes the

committee, it will be heard again in the other house, and you can testify there too.

Chapter 10: Contacting Your Legislators and Congress

Your elected officials work for you. A short, clear message from a constituent is one of the few things every office tracks. Here is how to make yours count.

Know Who Represents You

- **Nevada Legislature:** one state senator and one Assembly member. Find them by address at leg.state.nv.us/whosmylegislator.
- **U.S. Congress:** two U.S. senators for all of Nevada, and one member of the House of Representatives for your district. Nevada has four House districts. Find your House member at house.gov by entering your zip code, and your senators at senate.gov.
- **Local:** your county commissioner, and, if you live in a city, your city council member. Your county or city website lists them.

Which Office Handles What

Write to the official who can actually act. State laws, state agencies, the state budget, schools funding and Nevada's records and meeting laws belong to the Legislature and state officials. Federal laws, federal agencies, Social Security, Medicare, veterans benefits, federal land and immigration belong to Congress.

Members of Congress have caseworkers who help constituents with problems with federal agencies, such as a stuck Social Security claim, a lost passport application or a veterans benefit. This is free. Call the member's state office, not the Washington

office, and ask for a caseworker. You will likely be asked to sign a privacy release so the office can contact the agency on your behalf.

Email, Letter or Phone?

- **Phone calls** are counted quickly, and are good when a vote is coming up soon. Give your name, your town and your zip code, the bill or issue, and your position. Staff will usually write it down and tally it.
- **Emails and web forms** are good for a short, specific message. Most offices require you to use the form on the official's website.
- **Letters** are fine for state officials. For members of Congress, an email, a web form or a call to the local office is usually faster than a letter mailed to Washington.
- **Meetings** at a local office are possible. Ask the scheduler. Be on time, bring a one-page summary, and know your ask.

What Makes a Message Work

- Say you are a constituent and give your town.
- Cover one issue per message.
- Name the bill number if there is one.
- Say what you want them to do.
- Give one personal reason. Your own story matters more than talking points.
- Keep it short. A few paragraphs is plenty.
- Be polite, even if you are frustrated.

A sample letter is at the back of this book.

Follow Up and Keep Score

Ask for a reply. Then watch how the official votes. NELIS shows every recorded vote in the Nevada Legislature. Congress.gov shows bills and votes in Congress. Thank officials when they do

something you asked for. They hear far more complaints than thanks, and a thank-you note helps you be remembered the next time you write.

Staying Civil Disagree on the issue, never on the person. Threats, insults or crude language get a message set aside and can be a crime. A calm message from a neighbor who knows the facts is the most powerful kind there is.

Sample FOIA Request

[Date]

FOIA Officer

[Agency name and FOIA office address, or send through FOIA.gov or the agency's web form]

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officer,

Under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, I request copies of the following records:

[Describe the records as specifically as you can. Example: The final environmental assessment and any public comments received for the project named _____ in _____ County, Nevada, from January 1, 2025, to the present.]

I would like the records in electronic form, sent by email to [email address].

I am willing to pay fees up to $[amount]. If the fees will be higher, please tell me before you process the request. [Or: I request a fee waiver because _____.]

If you withhold any part of these records, please release the parts that are not exempt and tell me which exemption you are using for each part withheld.

Thank you for your help. Please contact me at [phone or email] with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Mailing address]

Sample Nevada Public Records Request

[Date]

[Records official or clerk]

[Agency name and address or email]

Re: Public Records Request under NRS Chapter 239

Dear [Name or Records Official],

Under the Nevada Public Records Act, NRS Chapter 239, I request copies of the following public records:

[Describe the records. Example: The contract between _____ County and _____ for road maintenance in Dayton, and all amendments, from July 1, 2024, to the present.]

Please send the records by email in electronic format to [email address], as provided in NRS 239.010. If the fees will be more than $[amount], please tell me before you make the copies.

As NRS 239.0107 provides, I look forward to your response within five business days. If any part of this request is denied, please tell me in writing and cite the specific law that makes the record confidential, and release the rest.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Phone and email]

Sample Public Comment

Good evening, Chair and members of the board. My name is [name], and I live in [town].

I am here about agenda item [number], [topic]. I ask you to [vote no, vote yes, delay the vote, add a condition, fix this road].

[One or two sentences of your main reason. Example: I drive this road every morning with my grandchildren. Since the spring the potholes near the school crossing have grown, and last month a neighbor lost a tire there.]

[One fact. Example: The county's own road report from last year lists this section as poor.]

Thank you for your time and your service. Again, I ask you to [repeat your request].

Sample Letter to a Legislator

[Date]

The Honorable [Name]

[Nevada Senate or Assembly]

[Address or email from the Legislature's website]

Re: [Bill number and short title]

Dear [Senator or Assemblymember] [Last name],

I am your constituent in [town], and I am writing to ask you to [support, oppose, amend] [bill number], which [one-line description].

[Two or three sentences on why it matters to you. Use a personal example.]

Thank you for your service to our district. I would appreciate knowing your position on this bill.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Street address, town, zip code]

[Phone and email]

My Officials

Office	Name and contact
Nevada state senator	_____
Nevada Assembly member	_____
U.S. senator	_____
U.S. senator	_____
U.S. representative	_____
County commissioner	_____
City council member (if in a city)	_____
School board trustee	_____
County clerk or records contact	_____

Request Log

Date sent	Agency	What I asked for	Due date	Result

Acronyms

FOIA. Freedom of Information Act

NELIS. Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System

NRS. Nevada Revised Statutes

OGIS. Office of Government Information Services

OIP. Office of Information Policy, U.S. Department of Justice

Sources

All web pages were read on November 18, 2026.

- FOIA.gov, Frequently Asked Questions.
- Nevada Revised Statutes Chapter 239, Public Records, leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-239.html (revised April 15, 2026, with 2025 changes).
- Nevada Revised Statutes Chapter 241, Meetings of State and Local Agencies, leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-241.html (revised April 15, 2026).
- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy, The Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552 (justice.gov/oip).
- Nevada Attorney General, Nevada Public Records Act training (January 28, 2026).
- Nevada Attorney General, Nevada's Open Meeting Law training (January 28, 2026).
- Lyon County, Citizen Advisory Board Handbook (revised May 1, 2025).
- Nevada Legislature, NELIS session information for the 84th (2027) Session, and the Opinion Poll and Find Your Legislators pages, leg.state.nv.us.

About This Book

Getting Answers From Your Government is part of a set of free plain-language guides from Trinfinity Enterprises. Its companions include How Nevada Government Works and How to Vote in Nevada. Laws were checked against official sources as of November 18, 2026. The 2027 Legislature may change some of them. This book is general information, not legal advice. If you find something that has changed or needs correcting, please write to andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.