

Public Education and Information Committee

Re: Hearing Locations

1. Formal Commission and committee hearings are generally to be conducted in the Statehouse, although committee chairs retain the discretion to hold meetings elsewhere in the State.
2. Regional panels of the Commission are encouraged for purposes of (i) informing the public about the OCMC's work and/or (ii) hearing public input.
 - a. The Commission co-chairs will appoint regional ad hoc Commission panels for this purpose, and appoint one member as the chair at input hearings.
 - b. Panel chairs are encouraged to invite several local officials to present.
 - c. Panels are encouraged to meet with local editorial boards and other groups they deem appropriate to discuss the Commission and its work either separately or in conjunction with public input hearings.

Commentary

Although there is some attraction to the idea of taking the Commission or its committees “on the road”, this actually results in only limited participation by both members and the public. There is therefore a presumption that full Commission meetings will occur in Columbus. Requiring some members to travel up to four hours for a particular hearing is generally unreasonable, and will often mean that some members cannot participate. Many members have been appointed specifically because of their broad public involvement and therefore have busy schedules.

Moreover, the public generally does not view the requirement that state business be conducted in Columbus as unreasonable or burdensome. Columbus is, after all, the seat of state government.

Two alternatives to taking hearings of the Commission or its committee “on the road” are to (1) set up a live video conference with the public at various locations to receive input in that fashion or (2) record public testimony so that it is available to other Commission and committee members.

The prospect of individual committees taking their work “on the road” is problematic. If committee hearings outside of Columbus are scheduled on the same day as either Commission or other committee meetings, members will invariably have a scheduling conflict. If committee meetings are instead held on different days, this increases the amount of time that members are asked to volunteer to the Commission each month. Nonetheless the chairs retain the discretion to hold committee hearings outside of Columbus.

When speaking with the public or groups regarding the OCMC or its work, it is contemplated that members would speak to the nature of and process for the Commission's work. Individual Commission members are discouraged from speaking about what the Commission might do or positions it might take.