

## insights

TYPES NOT MAPPED YET October 03, 2022 | TTR not mapped yet | Christopher T. Murray

# Question for the Record (QFR)

A written question posed to a witness after a congressional hearing.

### Question & Answer

Congress has historically utilized three different types of committees. Standing committees, the most common type of congressional committee, are permanent panels in both the House and Senate that fulfill a variety of roles (*e.g.*, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee). Within many standing committees are subcommittees with defined legislative authority under their jurisdiction, which can include oversight functions, though both the House and Senate have separate committees with broad oversight mandates as well. Joint Committees include members from both chambers and are often used to debate or report on matters concerning Congressional operations (*e.g.*, [the Joint Committee on Taxation](#)). Congress also has [Select Committees](#), which are usually used to conduct investigations of major events (*e.g.*, the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol).

Today, Congress has [more than 50](#) committees. The congressional committee system in part promotes checks and balances of federal agencies and departments and ensures Congress has the ability to delve into issues on a granular level.

### Question Everything

Committee hearings are generally divided into [four](#) categories: legislation, oversight, investigation, and confirmation. Legislative hearings are the most common type of hearing and are used by members to gather information in anticipation of the committee marking up and reporting out legislation. Oversight hearings are frequently used to supervise the executive branch to ensure fidelity of federal programs. Investigative hearings often involve an alleged or confirmed case of wrongdoing. Confirmation hearings are Senate-specific meetings used to vet presidential nominees to executive and judicial positions (*i.e.*, the “[advice and consent](#)” authority enumerated in the Constitution).

The standing rules for each committee typically limit how much time an individual member can question witnesses and receive verbal answers. Most hearings limit an individual member to five minutes of questions and responses. Accordingly, members often submit questions for the record, a process in which written questions are provided to witnesses after the hearing. For example, when a cabinet secretary testifies before Congress, detailed questions for the record are often submitted to his or her agency after the hearing to obtain further detail. The written questions and responses are ultimately included as part of the hearing’s official record.

### The Question of U

When limited hearing time and complex issues intersect, questions for the record - also known as QFRs - can be the best opportunity for organizations to raise an issue in a constructive manner and gather further information. Well-crafted questions for the record may elicit nuanced and detailed responses, especially from federal agencies, that would otherwise be difficult to obtain during a verbal back-and-forth in a hearing.

For any organization to be heard among the cacophony in Washington, it is important to come up with ways to break through the noise. But sometimes the most effective measure is the simplest: asking a question.



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