

## **BOX 3.4**   **Selected Formal Rules Governing Hearing Procedures**

Although House and Senate committees have wide latitude in how they organize and conduct hearings, formal rules in each chamber regulate these proceedings. Several of the most important rules for committee hearings are described here.

*Notice.* The committee chair shall publicly announce the date, place, and subject matter of a committee hearing at least one week before commencement of the hearing. House rules permit this rule to be waived either with the concurrence of the chair and ranking minority member or by majority vote of the committee. Senate rules permit the notice rule to be waived if the committee determines that good cause exists to begin a hearing at an earlier date.

*Openness.* Hearings shall be open to the public and the media. Each chamber has provisions that enable committees or subcommittees to close the hearings, but only for certain enumerated reasons such as endangering national security, compromising sensitive law enforcement information, or defaming or disgracing an individual.

*Quorum.* House rules stipulate that committees may fix the number of members who must be present to take testimony, but it may not be less than two. Senate rules allow committees to set any number who may be present to take testimony, even if just one senator.

*Witness Requirements.* Witnesses are required, unless there is good cause for noncompliance, to submit in advance copies of their written testimony to the committee. House rules also require nongovernmental witnesses to file a curriculum vitae and to disclose the amount and source of any federal grant or contract they might have received during the current year and preceding 2 years.

*Broadcasting.* House rules state that whenever any committee or subcommittee hearing is open to the public, those proceedings shall be open to coverage by radio or television or both. Senate rules provide that any public hearing of a committee or subcommittee may be broadcast under the terms specified in committee rules.

*Minority Party's Right to Call Witnesses.* The minority party on a committee is entitled, upon a request made to the chair by a majority of the minority members before the completion of the hearing, to call witnesses of its choosing to testify on the subject of the hearing for at least one day.