

## **Presbytery of Scioto Valley Bills and Overtures Committee**

### **Overtures and Amendments**

#### **A. OVERTURES**

1. Definition: The *Book of Order* states “The presbytery has the responsibility and power ... to maintain regular and continuing relationship to the higher governing bodies of the church, including ... proposing to the synod or the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church” (G-11.0103t(3)). “Overtures are items of business that have been approved by a presbytery or a synod that requests the General Assembly to take a particular action, or approve or endorse a particular statement or resolution” (General Assembly Standing Rule A.3.a).
  - a. An overture may arise in the deliberation of a session of a congregation of the Presbytery, a Presbytery committee, the Presbytery Council, or by referral from matters deliberated in Presbytery debate.
  - b. An overture may be the original work of the group presenting it. The Presbytery is asked to adopt the overture as its own communication to the General Assembly. The Presbytery receives the potential overture and may amend and change the proposed overture’s wording and/or intent before voting to send it on. If a majority of the Presbytery votes in favor of the overture, the Stated Clerk will communicate the overture to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. If the majority vote of the Presbytery is against the proposed overture, the matter ends.
  - c. An overture it may have its origin in the work of another presbytery. When an overture comes from another Presbytery, this Presbytery is asked to concur with the overture as presented. The Presbytery cannot change the overture, although it can add additional rationales to the existing overture. If a majority of the Presbytery votes in favor of the overture, the Stated Clerk will communicate the Presbytery’s concurrence (together with any additional rationales) to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.
2. General Assembly Timeframe: Overtures are to be submitted to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly in order to meet the following schedule of deadlines (General Assembly Standing Rule A.3.c):
  - a. Overtures proposing an amendment to the Constitution or requiring an interpretation by the General Assembly of the Book of Order (see Book of Order, G-18.0301a and G-13.0112c) must be delivered in writing to the Stated Clerk postmarked no later than 120 days prior to the convening of the General Assembly, and shall be promptly referred to the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (see Book of Order, G-13.0112d and G 18.0300).
  - b. All overtures that have financial implications for current or future years’ budgets must be delivered in writing to the Stated Clerk postmarked no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the General Assembly. Overtures with financial implications not received within the designated

time limit shall not be considered, but shall be returned to the originating governing body.

- c. All other overtures intended for consideration by the General Assembly shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk, postmarked no later than forty-five days before the convening of the General Assembly.
  - d. Overtures not received within the designated time limits shall not be considered, but shall be returned to the originating governing body for reconsideration.
3. Process:
- a. The General Assembly's timeframe must be taken into account in proposing overtures and allowing for their process through the Presbytery.
  - b. All proposed overtures are to be communicated to the Stated Clerk who will forward them to the moderator of the Bills and Overtures Committee.
  - c. The Bills and Overtures Committee will in a timely fashion review any proposed overture.
  - d. Proposed overtures will normally be presented during the concluding months of the calendar year prior to the General Assembly.
  - e. Overtures originating from PSV sessions or committees:
    - (a.) Proposed overtures will normally be presented during the concluding months of the calendar year prior to the General Assembly
    - (b.) If an overture is generated by a session or an entity of the Presbytery, the committee will examine the overture with regard to these aspects:
      - (i.) Format – is it written in accord with the General Assembly guidelines (Manual of the General Assembly A.3.b.(4))?
      - (ii.) Duplication – has a similar overture already been proposed in the current cycle of overture submission? If one has been submitted, the Committee may suggest that the presbytery concur with the existing overture.
      - (iii.) Repetition – has the desired action been voted by a recent General Assembly?
      - (iv.) Redundancy – has a similar overture already been passed by a previous General Assembly?
      - (v.) Timeliness – can the Presbytery act within the constraints of the General Assembly's time frame?

The Committee may consult with the group proposing an overture regarding the above aspects and offer technical advice.
    - (c.) The Committee may or may not offer a recommendation to the Presbytery about the overture.
    - (d.) Proposed overtures will be forwarded to the next stated Presbytery meeting. The call and agenda for the meeting will include the text of the overture and the session or committee of origin for the overture.
    - (e.) The group proposing an overture will have the opportunity to have a representative speak to the Presbytery about the overture.

- (f.) When a proposed overture is offered to the Presbytery for adoption, it ceases to belong to the group proposing it and becomes the property of the Presbytery. During the consideration of a proposed overture the Presbytery may amend, change or otherwise alter the overture by means of parliamentary process. The decision of the Presbytery is the action of the Presbytery, even though the action adopted may not be the one intended by the group proposing the initial overture.
- f. Overtures originating from other presbyteries for which concurrence is sought:
  - (a.) The committee will verify its reception by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.
  - (b.) When verified, the overture will be submitted directly to the Presbytery at its next stated meeting. If there is a member or committee of this Presbytery which is sponsoring the overture, they will have the opportunity to speak to the Presbytery about the overture.
  - (c.) The Committee will include the text of the overture and the presbytery of origin in the call for the meeting.

## B. AMENDMENTS

1. Definition: Amendments are communications from the General Assembly to the constituent presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeking their affirmative or negative votes regarding several types of actions:
  - a. Changes to the *Book of Confessions* (G-18.0200).
  - b. Changes to the *Book of Order* (G-18.0300)
  - c. Organic union with another ecclesiastical body (G-15.0301)
  - d. Ecumenical Statements (G-15.0302)
2. Constitutional Requirements:
  - a. Approval:
    - i. A change to the *Book of Confessions* or approval of organic union requires an affirmative vote of two thirds of the presbyteries and an affirmative vote of the next ensuing General Assembly.
    - ii. A change to the *Book of Order* or the adoption of an ecumenical statement requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the presbyteries.
  - b. Timeframe:

Presbyteries have one year from the date of the adjournment of a General Assembly to present their votes to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.
  - c. Responsibility:

The responsibility of the Presbytery is to vote for or against any proposed amendment, although the Presbytery may choose to take no action on particular amendments. Proposed amendments cannot be changed by action of the Presbytery and must be voted on in the form that they are received.

3. Process:

- a. When the official text of proposed amendments is received, the Stated Clerk will forward it to the Bills and Overtures Committee.
- b. The Committee will review the proposed changes and prepare to present them to the Presbytery in a timely manner.
- c. Each amendment will have the caption given to it by the General Assembly Stated Clerk.
- d. The Committee may present recommendations for the amendments. The recommendations are for guidance only and are not the object of the vote, since the question being asked by the General Assembly is "Shall the amendment be adopted – Yes or No?"
- e. The Committee will present the amendments and any recommendations and may also provide additional information as it deems useful.
- f. The Committee will publish the proposed amendments and its recommendations in the call and agenda for the Presbytery meeting at which they are to be voted on.
- g. The Committee may recommend voting on amendments singly or in groups.
- h. When appropriate the Committee may recommend that voting be done by written ballot.
- i. The Stated Clerk will communicate to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly an affirmative or negative vote for each amendment.