

Overture Overview

The guidelines for presenting overtures are found in the Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule A.3. The key provisions are:

Standing Rule A.3.b. and A.3.c.(5) require that the stated clerk of a presbytery or synod considering an overture to the General Assembly shall:

- Examine the most recently published Minutes of the General Assembly to determine if a similar overture has already been passed;
- Consult with the Office of the General Assembly to determine whether the desired action has been voted on by any previous General Assembly;
- Consult with the Office of the General Assembly to determine whether a similar overture has already been proposed for the current year. If so, the presbytery or synod will be encouraged to concur with that overture.
- Presbyteries or synods submitting overtures with a recommendation(s) that affects the work or budget of a General Assembly entity(ies) shall submit evidence that the affected entity(ies) has (have) been consulted. If such evidence is not submitted, the Stated Clerk shall recommend that the overture be received and referred to a future session of the General Assembly so that consultation may take place. These procedures are designed to ensure better communication in conceiving and writing recommendations considered at the assembly. The consultation may take place by fax, phone, mail, or personal conversation. **C. Format of the Overture: Recommendation Section:** “The Presbytery [or Synod] of _____ overtures the 221st General Assembly (2014) to” The recommendation section should be worded with specific, concise directives so that the General Assembly can make a clear, informed decision, and so that financial implications, if any, can be accurately assessed. **Rationale Section:** The rationale section should be as concise as possible, and provide insight into the reasons for the recommendation. Material included in the rationale is for information only and is not a part of the action of the assembly. Tell the reader, in short paragraphs, what is the problem, what is the harm, why the current rule or program is not adequate, what is needed.

D. Submitting the Overture:

The overture may be submitted electronically, preferably in Word, to kay.moore@pcusa.org Please do not submit PDFs as OGA staff must edit and format the overture. Submitting the overture electronically eliminates the necessity of OGA staff rekeying the overture. If electronic submission is not feasible, a fax copy is acceptable. Please fax to 502-569-8642.

Please also provide either a hard copy of the overture signed by the stated clerk, or a cover letter with signature (via fax) to certify the overture’s authenticity as an action of the council.

Remember that the receipt of all overtures in OGA will be acknowledged by letter. If an acknowledging letter is not received within a few weeks after submission, please check with Kay Moore at kay.moore@pcusa.org or 888-728-7228, extension 5418, to ensure that the overture has been received.

E. Overture Advocate:

Each presbytery or synod submitting an overture may name an overture advocate. The overture advocate must be able to be available at the General Assembly to provide information on the background and intent of the overture to the assembly committee to which the overture is referred (Standing Rule A.3.e.; see also Standing Rule E.2.e. “Privilege of the Floor”). Be aware that naming a commissioner as an overture

advocate will most certainly require that the commissioner will be taken away from their assigned assembly committee business to go to another assembly committee to advocate for the overture.

In the letter acknowledging receipt of the overture, the Office of the General Assembly will request overture advocate information. Please provide the name of an overture advocate as soon as possible. Several weeks before the convening of the General Assembly, the Office of the General Assembly will correspond with all overture advocates. The overture advocates receive information identifying the item number and title of the overture they will be advocating, the assembly committee to which the overture is referred and the location of the meeting room in the convention center, and the names of the leadership of the assembly committee. The Office of the General Assembly provides orientation for overture advocates at the meeting of the General Assembly before the assembly committees meet.

F. Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. What is the deadline for concurring with another presbytery's or synod's overture?

A. The deadline for concurring with an overture is the same as the deadline for submitting that overture. If a presbytery or synod intends to concur with an overture to amend the Book of Order, the concurrence letter must be received by the 120-day deadline.

Q. If our presbytery concurs with another presbytery's overture, do we name an overture advocate?

A. A presbytery or synod that concurs with an overture from another presbytery or synod may send an overture advocate to assist in presenting the matter to the assembly committee.

Q. How are overtures presented to a presbytery or synod?

A. An overture to a presbytery or synod can come from anyone or any entity that is eligible to bring business to that body.

G. Deadlines for submitting overtures are as follows:

120-day deadline: overtures requesting amendment to or interpretation of the Book of Order. These overtures are then automatically referred to the Advisory

Committee on the Constitution for advice to the General Assembly (see G-6.04).

60-day deadline: overtures having financial implications for current or future budgets. 45-day deadline: all other overtures. Overtures not timely received will be returned to the originating council.

221st GA (2014): June 14-21, 2014 (Detroit, MI)

120-day Deadline: 60-day Deadline: 45-day Deadline: 30-day Deadline:

February 14, 2014 (amendment to/interpretation of Book of Order) April 15, 2014 (financial implications) April 30, 2014 (all other overtures) May 15, 2014 (consultation)

222nd GA (2016): June 18-25, 2016 (Portland, OR)

120-day Deadline: 60-day Deadline: 45-day Deadline: 30-day Deadline:

February 19, 2016 (amendment to/interpretation of Book of Order) April 19, 2016 (financial implications) May 4, 2016 (all other overtures) May 19, 2016 (consultation)

223rd GA (2018): June 16-23, 2018 (St. Louis, MO):

120-day Deadline: 60-day Deadline: 45-day Deadline: 30-day Deadline:

February 16, 2018 (amendment to/interpretation of Book of Order) April 17, 2018 (financial implications) May 2, 2018 (all other overtures, comments) May 17, 2018 (consultation)

Notice of a Possible Change in Processing Overtures for the 221st General Assembly (2014)

Amendment 12-F, currently being voted on by the presbyteries, recommends that section G-3.0302d be amended to require that overtures have at least one concurrence from another presbytery or synod before the overture can be referred to the next General Assembly. If approved, Amendment 12-F will go into effect on July 7, 2013.

- All overtures received before July 7, 2013 will be processed as usual and will be forwarded to the 221st General Assembly (2014).
- Overtures received on or after July 7, 2013 will be processed as follows:

-If Amendment 12-F does not receive the necessary affirmative votes (87), there will be no amendment to G-3.0302d, and no change in the overture process. -If Amendment 12-F receives 87 or more votes, the overture(s) will not be referred to the next assembly until at least one other presbytery or synod has timely concurred with it.

It will be the responsibility of the presbytery submitting the initial overture to secure the needed concurrence. Keep in mind that the deadlines for concurring with another overture are as follows:

120-day Deadline: February 14, 2014 (amendment to/interpretation of Book of Order) 45-day Deadline: April 30, 2014 (all other overtures)