

How to Submit an Overture (reprinted from Handbook for Stated Clerks – PCUSA)

A. Overview:

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

- Overtures must be approved by a presbytery or a synod.
- Overtures must request the General Assembly to take a particular action or approve or endorse a particular statement or resolution.
- Overtures must be timely submitted to the Office of the General Assembly (see G. below).
- The originating governing body may appoint an overture advocate (see section E. below).

B. Researching the Overture:

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 217th General Assembly (2006) 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 is the current rule or program not adequate, what is needed.

A change in presbytery boundaries, or moving a church from one presbytery to another requires action by both presbyteries and the synod, or both synods. This may be submitted as three separate overtures or in a single overture that recites the dates when each governing body voted to approve. Treat a change in boundaries as you would an amendment to a paragraph. Repeat the entire description of the boundaries of the presbytery as amended.

D. Submitting the Overture:

The overture may be submitted electronically (kmoore@ctr.pcusa.org) or faxed (502-569-8614). Submitting the overture electronically or providing a disk copy eliminates the necessity of OGA staff rekeying the overture.

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 governing body.

Please 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 the Office of the General Assembly 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 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 still may send an overture advocate to assist in presenting the matter to the assembly committee.

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-18.0301).

60-day deadline: overtures having financial implications for current or future budgets.

45-day deadline: all other overtures.

30-day deadline: time by which consultation with affected entity must have occurred (see B.above).

Overtures not timely received will be returned to the originating governing body. All deadlines are postmark deadlines.

218th GA (2008): June 21-28, 2008 (San Jose, CA):

120-day Deadline: February 22, 2008

90-day Deadline: March 24, 2008

60-day Deadline: April 22, 2008

45-day Deadline: May 7, 2008

30-day Deadline: May 22, 2008

219th GA (2010): July 3-10, 2010 (Minneapolis, MN):

120-day Deadline: March 5, 2010

90-day Deadline: April 5, 2010

60-day Deadline: May 4, 2010

45-day Deadline: May 19, 2010

30-day Deadline: June 3, 2010

220th GA (2012): June 30-July 7, 2012 (Pittsburgh, PA):

120-day Deadline: March 2, 2012

90-day Deadline: April 2, 2012

60-day Deadline: May 1, 2012

45-day Deadline: May 16, 2012

30-day Deadline: May 31, 2012