

General Assembly Overture Submission

PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING OVERTURES

According to the General Assembly (GA) Standing Rules, in order for an overture to be considered, it must meet several criteria.

- It must be approved by two presbyteries or a synod;
- It must request the GA to take a particular action or approve or endorse a particular statement or resolution;
- It must follow a particular format;
- It should not duplicate another overture; and
- It must be timely submitted.

Concurrences:

All overtures from presbyteries must receive a concurrence from at least one additional presbytery. The deadlines for concurrences are identical to those for submitting an overture. Late concurrences will not be accepted.

Format:

GA overtures consist of two sections: Recommendations and Rationale.

Overtures should be drafted according to the following form:

“The Presbytery of _____ overtures the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the PC(USA) to [state the specific action the General Assembly is asked to take].”

A rationale should be appended, stating the reasons for submitting the overture.

Rationale sections should be as concise as possible. Commissioners are swamped with reading, and longer rationales are less likely to be considered. Rationale sections provide background information only, and are not part of the final action.

Who May Submit an Overture:

According to Roberts' Rules, any commissioner may propose any action to a deliberative body. Sessions and presbytery entities such as the Commission on Ministry (COM), the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), etc., may submit an overture directly to the Presbytery Assembly after they are reviewed by the Stated Clerk and the Presbyter's Bills and Overtures Committee.

Stated Clerk Review Prior to Presbytery Consideration:

In order for an overture to be considered, it should be submitted to the Stated Clerk about six weeks prior to the presbytery meeting. This review allows the Stated Clerk to be sure that the overture is properly formatted, to conduct the background check required by the GA rules, and to publish the overture in the call papers. You can assist the Stated Clerk by checking to see if a similar overture has been approved or otherwise considered by a past GA.

Timely Submission:

Certain deadlines must be met for an overture to be considered. The deadlines are firm. Late overtures will be returned to the presbytery by the Office of the General Assembly.

The deadlines are:

120 days: for overtures requesting an amendment or interpretation of the Book of Order.

60 days: for overtures having financial implications. (Note – most overtures involve some sort of financial impact, even if slight, and the GA takes this very seriously.)

45 days: for all other overtures.

(30 days: for the Stated Clerk’s consultation with any affected GA entity.)

The following deadlines must be met.

GA Deadline	GA Date
120 days	February 16, 2018
60 days	April 17, 2018
45 days	May 2, 2018
30 days	May 17, 2018

Overtures cannot be considered by the presbytery after the February, 2018 presbytery meeting.

If the Overture Passes:

If the presbytery adopts the proposed overture, the Stated Clerk will transmit the overture to the Office of the General Assembly.

Each presbytery submitting an overture may name an overture advocate. The advocate must be able to attend the General Assembly and the meeting of the proper GA committee. GA commissioners should

not be overture advocates, since the role of advocate will likely interfere with the commissioner's own assigned committee duties.

If an overture was proposed by a presbytery entity such as COM, that entity chooses its own moderator. If the overture was proposed by a work group or mission body, that work group or mission body will ordinarily choose the overture advocate. (In the rare situation that a concern is raised about the named advocate, then a new advocate should be selected or the nomination should be submitted to the full Presbytery Council for a vote.). When an overture is proposed by one or more sessions, the session(s) will choose the advocate.

If the Presbytery Assembly approves your proposed overture, notify the Stated Clerk of your recommended overture advocate as soon as possible, so that any questions can be resolved and the advocate's contact information can be provided to the OGA. Several weeks before the GA begins, the OGA will contact the overture advocates about advocate training and orientation.

Any request for funds to support the overture advocate should be submitted to the Stated Clerk. The amount of funds available to support overture advocates will be determined by the Presbytery Council prior to the GA. Advocates should keep their receipts for later reimbursement.