

Block #3: Reports and Overtures

A.1.c.

It is the responsibility of the Stated Clerk to distribute the business of the assembly, with translations as appropriate, in a manner that allows the church to carefully discern the work of the assembly. ~~All items of business submitted for action by the assembly, including any accompanying communications and resource material, shall be translated into the languages approved by the Stated Clerk. If materials submitted for a particular item of business exceed the word limit set for that category of business outlined below, the Stated Clerk shall determine whether to accept that item of business and may assess to the submitting body a fee for the costs of translation of the excess material.~~

Commissioners and advisory delegates need full access to the business of the Assembly. Leaving certain items untranslated, as is current practice, is an equity issue. This amendment clarifies this policy and practice and expands it to the full spectrum of business considered by the Assembly while merging language related to these expenses into a single location in the Standing Rules.

A.2.d

d. All reports shall be limited to five thousand words except the report of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the length of which shall be determined by the Stated Clerk and the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. A request for an exception to the length of a report, up to ten thousand words, shall be submitted to the Stated Clerk no later than forty-five days prior to the deadline for the submission of the report and shall include the anticipated length of the report. ~~The Stated Clerk may assess a fee of the entity or committee whose report exceeds five thousand words for the costs incurred in translating, printing and distributing the excess pages. Payment of the fee shall be submitted to the treasurer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation.~~ If the Stated Clerk and the representatives of any body are unable to agree, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall determine the length of the report.

Reports are no longer printed, and the process for collecting the fee has changed, so the amendment reflects consistency with current practice.

A.3.b

b. Concurrences are items of business that have been approved by a presbytery that recommend an action identical to that in an overture already received for that assembly. The first concurrence received by the Stated Clerk, fulfilling *Book of Order*, G-3.0302d, must be submitted by the deadlines appropriate for the overture ~~and entitles the submitting presbytery to an overture advocate.~~ Subsequent concurrences must meet the forty-five-day rule for business. ~~The recommendation, rationale, and any resource materials submitted for a concurrence shall ordinarily not exceed 1500 words.~~

The current wording inaccurately implies that mid councils submitting subsequent concurrences are not entitled to an overture advocate. A.3.f confirms that “Each council who submits an overture or concurrence may appoint only one overture advocate.” This also adds a word limit for concurrences to bring them in line with overtures.

A.3.c

Update STAN-21 <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000817>

"c. The stated clerk of a presbytery or synod considering an overture to the General Assembly shall:

"(1) Consult with the Office of the General Assembly regarding past and current actions on similar items of business, including:

"(4) a. Examining the most recently published Minutes of the General Assembly or electronic meeting records to determine if a similar overture has already been passed.

"(2) b. ~~Consult with the Office of the General Assembly to~~ determineing whether the desired action has been *disapproved* voted by ~~any~~ the previous General Assembly.

"(3) c. . ~~Consult with the Office of the General Assembly to~~ determineing whether a similar overture has already been proposed in order that the presbytery or synod may **consider** concurring with the existing overture.

"Should the overture be determined to ~~deal with substantially the same issue~~ propose an action substantially the same as an action considered at the previous General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall determine whether or not to refer ~~them~~ it to the Assembly Committee on Business Referral. The Stated Clerk shall report to the committee regarding those overtures not referred.

"(2) (4)-Draft the overture in the following form:

" 'The Presbytery of _____ overtures the [# of the assembly] General Assembly [(year)] of the PC(USA) to [state the specific action the General Assembly is asked to take].'

"To this shall be appended a rationale, stating the reasons for submitting the overture. **The overture, rationale, and any resource materials submitted together shall ordinarily not exceed 1500 words.**" ~~The Stated Clerk may assess a fee to the synod or presbytery originating any overture or concurrence that exceeds 1500 words, including the rationale, for the costs incurred in translating the excess pages.~~

The existing Standing Rules do not provide guidance as to the purpose of consultation for both mid councils and staff facilitating consultation. This amendment makes clear what actions should be taken during the consultation process and gives instruction on subsequent steps that may be taken regarding the overture's referral to the General Assembly.

It also encourages overtures to be as succinct as possible, both to honor the time and energy of commissioners and advisory delegates who consider the overture, and to recoup the costs of translating lengthy documents.

Update STAN-20 <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000816>

A.3.d-e

"d. Submitting Overtures

"(1) 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-6.04a and G6.02) must be *submitted* ~~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-6.02 and G-6.04).

"(2) All overtures that have financial implications for current or future years' budgets must be *submitted* ~~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 council.~~

"(3) All other overtures intended for consideration by the General Assembly shall be *submitted* ~~forwarded~~ to the Stated Clerk, ~~postmarked~~ no later than forty-five days before the convening of the General Assembly.

"(4) Overtures not received within the designated time limits shall not be considered, ~~but shall be returned to the originating council for reconsideration.~~

"(5) Presbyteries or synods submitting overtures with a recommendation(s) that affects the work or budget of a General Assembly entity(ies) shall submit **with the overture** evidence that the affected entity(ies) has (have) been consulted. ~~in an appendix to the overture.~~ 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~~ **the overture shall not be considered.**

~~"e. Overtures that do not propose constitutional amendment or interpretation, and that are postmarked at least sixty days prior to the convening of the General Assembly, shall be published (print or electronic) in the reports distributed by the Stated Clerk. Overtures received in the same manner, postmarked no later than forty-five days prior to the convening of the General Assembly, shall be distributed to the commissioners before the convening of the General Assembly."~~

With the transition from a paper-driven assembly to a digital process, the language regarding submission of papers does not reflect the reality of the process. These amendments enable the Standing Rules to catch up with the digital process for submission of papers to the General Assembly, **and reduces repetition.**

A.6.b. add a new section b and renumber following paragraphs:

A commissioners' resolution that exceeds 750 words, including the rationale, shall not be accepted for referral.

The timeline for translation of commissioners resolutions is very short, so it is important to be succinct. 750 words is half of that permitted in an overture, which has been reviewed by a larger representative council of the church.

C.3.c

c. Items of business to be considered by the General Assembly shall be referred in one of the following ways:

(1) for consideration by an assembly committee and recommendation for action by the General Assembly;

- (2) for consideration and action by an assembly committee with a report of the action to the General Assembly;
- (3) for consideration by the General Assembly through its inclusion in a consent agenda when the committee has approved a motion by 75 percent or more;
- (4) for consideration by the General Assembly in a plenary business session;
- (5) declined for referral.

The amendment clarifies that some submitted items of business may be declined for referral.

New Item: Amendment to C.1.c.

The [Co-]Moderator[s] of the General Assembly shall appoint a moderator and a vice moderator to each committee. The moderator positions are filled by commissioners to the upcoming General Assembly or may be from an assembly within the last six years. All vice moderator positions shall be filled by commissioners to the upcoming General Assembly. Final appointment shall be made only after consultation with **the a representative of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly**, and then also with **a representatives** of the General Assembly Committee on Representation regarding the inclusivity mandated in the Book of Order, F- 1.0403 and G-3.0103. The moderators of at least one-half of the assembly committees, including any committees dealing with finance and budgets, shall be ruling elders. The moderators of at least one-half of the assembly committees should be women. The moderators of at least two-thirds of the assembly committees shall be current commissioners. No more than one person from any one presbytery may be appointed to serve as a moderator. All synods shall be ~~equitably~~ represented **across the full spectrum of moderator and vice-moderator appointments.**

This language is more expansive and better reflects current practice.