

50th General Assembly Voting Guide
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This guide is merely the author's opinion that others may find helpful in processing the deliberation of the Assembly. No attempt to bind consciences should be inferred. This is a public document and I give permission to share it broadly in a spirit of transparency. My deepest desire in doing this is for the unity, purity, peace, and flourishing of the PCA. It may be worth noting that I was the chairman of the PCA GA's AIC on Abuse (DASA), thus my opinions on those matters may bear more weight.

NOTE: I will be updating this guide, so go back to semperref.org to download the latest copy

	OVERTURES	PRESBYTERY	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE	TITLE	RECOMMENDATION	CCB	RATIONALE
(GA49) O41	Tennessee Valley Presbytery	50th GA OC	Amend BCO 35-1 to Expand Potential Witness Eligibility	Answer in reference to O13	No conflict		I am strongly in favor of amending the BCO along these lines and supported this overture last year, as did the recommendation of the DASA committee. However, I think O13 addresses well some of the concerns expressed in last year's OC and support it's passage.
1	Southwest Florida Presbytery	MNA	Restructure Southwest Florida Presbytery Boundary	YES			MNA recommends (pg. 605, ln. 41)
2	Covenant	IRC	Request PCA Join International Conference of Reformed Churches	IRC Rec: postpone to 51st GA			IRC recommends postponing until after the 2026 meeting of the ICRC so that a GA representative can attend the ICRC meeting and report back (pg. 902, ln. 22).
3	James River	CCB, OC	Amend RAO 14-9.h and RAO 15-8.g to Limit General Assembly Debate	OC Rec	No conflict		I don't have a strong opinion either way on this. I will be on the Overtures Committee and will likely be shaped by the arguments presented there.
4	Central Florida	MNA	Transfer Pasco County, Florida, to the Presbytery of Southwest Florida	YES			MNA recommends (pg. 605, ln. 44)
5	Tidewater	CCB, MNA, OC	Change BCO 8-6 Regarding Chaplain Administration of Sacraments	Refer back to Presbytery	Conflict		While the idea of this amendment seems good in general, it is in need of some tidying up in several places. While I am for military chaplains being able administer the sacraments while on deployment, there seems to be a constitutional issue of what particular church any persons baptized by a chaplain would be a member. We should send this back to the presbytery, without prejudice, to incorporate the advice of the CCB, the issues raised in the OC debate, and from the Stated Clerk.

	OVERTURES	PRESBYTERY	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE	TITLE	RECOMMENDATION	CCB	RATIONALE
6	South Texas	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 13-6, 21-4.b, and 24-1 To Require Criminal Background Checks of all Minister and Officer Candidates	YES	No conflict		I am in favor of the idea of amending our procedures to place more protections against predators entering and staying in the ministry. This overture is a good start. Any logistical issues can be worked out in the lower courts. Almost every human institution does this as a protective measure, as do other denominations and Christian ministries. We are way behind on this. We need to start catching up. We should not let quibbles over cost and procedure stop us from protecting the vulnerable. If there are problems we can amend this later on. Adopt this necessary amendment.
7	Southern New England	CCB, AC, CDM, MNA, MTW, RUF, CC, CTS, PCAF, Geneva, RH	Amend RAO 4-21.d for Committees of Commissioners to Review Committee and Board Compliance and Policies	NO	No conflict		Though I could be persuaded otherwise, especially by the recommendations of the permanent committees, I am not in favor of giving more authority to Committees of Commissioners to potentially subvert the hard work done by our permanent committees and agencies. Remember, the permanent committees are already governed by the General Assembly through a board of TEs and REs elected by the assembly itself. These board members attend several meetings a year and are thoroughly informed on all matters pertaining the committee or agency. Committees of Commissioners perform a vital function, but it is through the elected boards that governance should flow, not by commissioners appointed to the work for a two hour meeting, one day out of the year. If anyone is concerned about the governance of any particular committee or agency, the answer is to elect board members that you think will do a better job. NOTE: AC recommends adoption with their amendment (pg 327 line 19ff). I would not strongly oppose this.
8	Arizona	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 31-10 for Non-censure Suspension Option During Investigation	YES, as amended	Conflict		While the current version of BCO 31-10 already allows for a church officer to be suspended during a 31-2 investigation by a simple majority vote, this amendment would bring clarity to the BCO that it can also be done during investigation, and not only after an indictment. I will propose the following amendments to the overture: to reduce the majority from 2/3 to a simple majority, as this is the level it has always been; delete the first sentence of the second paragraph, delete the third paragraph and the phrase "in coordination with the lower courts," to bring in compliance with CCB recommendation; and combine the fourth paragraph in with the first (investigation and any subsequent judicial process), such that the suspension would go through investigation and any subsequent trial without any additional votes needing to take place. I would also add a sentence stating that any member under BCO 31-2 investigation shall not be considered as a member in good standing, so that they do not have the ability to flee jurisdiction through transfer of membership.

	OVERTURES	PRESBYTERY	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE	TITLE	RECOMMENDATION	CCB	RATIONALE
9	Arizona	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 7 to Codify the Biblical Standard for Church Officers Related to Human Sexuality	With reference to O23	No conflict		
10	Northern New England	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 32-19 to Clarify Use of Professional Counsel in Cases of Process	Answer with reference to O14	Conflict		I think that O14 is a better version of this, because it leaves in place the allowance for any member of the PCA to represent a case before the SJC.
11	Platte Valley	CCB, SJC, OC	Amend BCO 15-4, 45-1, and 45-4 to Allow Objections by GA Commissioners to SJC Decisions	YES	No conflict		I see no problem with allowing commissioners of the GA to voice objections to SJC decisions they don't agree with. It will not change the verdict, but will give voice to dissenting parties. There may be an objection that this amendment will open the gates to flood the minutes with objections. Perhaps the rule could be amended to state that one blanket dissent per case is allowed that any commissioner can put their name to.
12	Evangel	OC, AC	Petition Government to End Sex-change Procedures for Minors	YES, as amended			While in general I do not think that making denominational declarations on cultural issues is helpful, I do agree that the imposition of gender ideology on children is a major issue in our society. I'm not strongly for or against this overture, thus my support would depend on how it is amended in the Overtures Committee. My support would be stronger if the statement also renounced the sin of bullying and discrimination, First Amendment religious exceptions excluded, of transgender persons.

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13	Northern California	CCB, SJC, OC	Amend BCO 35-1 and 35-7 to Allow All Persons as Witnesses in Cases of Process	YES	No conflict	Adoption of this overture is essential to correct a flaw in our judicial process. As it currently stands, an eyewitness to a sexual assault, an ER doctor who performs a rape kit on a victim, or a victim of abuse who do not believe in God would not be permitted to testify. <i>BCO</i> 35-1 already states that, "It belongs to the court to judge the degree of credibility to be attached to all evidence." If a court judges that a person's lack of belief in God is antagonistic enough that it raises doubts regarding their credibility, they may weigh that accordingly. Further, <i>BCO</i> 35-6 already allows for the taking of an oath in some other wording, "If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before a court, who for conscientious reasons prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he should be allowed to do so." The court could also charge the witness, that regardless of their personal belief, the Great Judge of Heaven and Earth will nonetheless judge them for their truthfulness in their testimony. Whether they believe in God or not, God, ultimately, will hold them account for what they testify in any court of the church.
14	Northern California	CCB, SJC, OC	Amend BCO 32-19 Regarding Use of Professional Counsel in Cases of Process	YES	Conflict	I respectfully disagree with the CCB that the amendment removes the rights of any member. Some parties are already disqualified from participating in some aspects of court proceedings. Members restricted from participation in some aspects of a proceeding still have rights to deliberate, debate, and vote on the verdict.
15	Bryce Avenue Presbyterian Church, White Rock, New Mexico	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 53 To Disallow Exhortation, Preaching, or Teaching by Women in Worship	Postpone indefinitely	No conflict	<i>BCO</i> 12.5.e already enjoins church Sessions "to ensure that the Word of God is preached only by such men as are sufficiently qualified (<i>BCO</i> 4 4, 53-2, 1 Timothy 2:11-12)." The quotation of 1 Timothy 12 is significant, showing that our constitution already sufficiently prohibits women to preach in worship services. Beyond this, the overture goes too far in seeming to forbid any teaching of men by women in a broad array of settings. Voting "no" may be difficult for some, purely on principle, so postponing indefinitely is my recommended action.
16	Catawba Valley	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 7 to Codify the Biblical Standard for Church Officers as Related to Self-Description by Biblical Sins	With reference to O23	No conflict	

OVERTURES	PRESBYTERY	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE	TITLE	RECOMMENDATION	CCB	RATIONALE
17	Session of Meadowview Reformed	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 7 To Disqualify from Office Men Describing their Personhood, Being, or Identity by a Sin Struggle	With reference to O23	No conflict	
18	from the Sessions of: Carriage Lane Presbyterian Church, Peachtree City, GA; Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fayetteville, GA; East Cobb Presbyterian Church, Marietta, GA; Tucker Presbyterian Church, Tucker, GA.	OC	Affirm Christ-Centered Racial Reconciliation and Reject Secular Social Justice and Critical Theory Ideology	NO		I am generally skeptical of any overture coming from a church Session that was not approved by its presbytery, though that does not automatically disqualify it. Further, in general I do not think that making denominational declarations on cultural issues is helpful. Thirdly, our Ad Interim Report on Race was appointed by the GA and well received by its commissioners. That report deals with both these issues, and we should lean on that expertise in this case. Lastly, I am not personally persuaded that we should wholly reject social justice or critical theory as containing no value for thinking through the issues of race in our society.
19	Tennessee Valley	AC	Request Administrative Committee to Address Questions re Presbytery Jurisdiction and Committee/Agency Employment	Refer to CCB		While the AC has recommended answering in the negative based on having no constitutional authority to weigh in, some answer is needed to answer these important questions regarding reporting and jurisdiction of Agency employees who are also members of Presbyteries. I feel that CCB should answer these questions for us so that we are very clear on how our rules and constitution work vis-a-vis reporting and investigating moral failure.

OVERTURES	PRESBYTERY	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE	TITLE	RECOMMENDATION	CCB	RATIONALE
20	Potomac	AC	Request Administrative Committee to Research Use of Electronic Records for Denominational Purposes	YES		The Administrative Committee recommends answering in the affirmative (pg. 328, line 18ff).
21	from the Session of First Presbyterian Church	CCB, OC, SJC	Amend BCO 33-1 and 34-1 Specifying Causes and Processes for Original Jurisdiction Requests	NO	No conflict	I am generally skeptical of any overture coming from a church Session that was not approved by its presbytery, though that does not automatically disqualify it, though one wonders why the presbytery (Southeast Alabama Presbytery) did not agree with the amendment. In this case, I am for increasing the threshold for petitioning for original jurisdiction, but I am not in favor of the removal of the higher court's discretion in whether or not to indict. In other words, the "shall" parts of this amendment bother me. I think we should leave the <i>BCO</i> as is.
22	from the Session of First Presbyterian Church	CCB, OC, SJC	Amend RAO 8-4.h; 17-1; and 19-2 to Specify When Minority Reports Are Permitted	NO	No conflict	Again, one wonders why the presbytery (Southeast Alabama Presbytery) did not agree with the amendment, which adds scrutiny. Further, I think that allowing a minority report to originate from outside the SJC is highly problematic. Members of the SJC have sworn to be fully qualified on each case before the commission, having read the entirety of the Record of the Case. I do not want to open this pandoras box right now.
23	Mississippi Valley	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 8-2 and 9-3 to Require Officers' Conformity to Biblical Standards for Chastity and Sexual Purity in Self-description	NO	No conflict	We've already been through this over the past several years and arrived at two consensus amendments that will be ratified at this year's General Assembly. We should vote no on this and any other overture that is attempting another bite at the apple on the "self-description" issue. Of the three similar overtures, this may be the most preferable, but the phrase, "descriptions of themselves," is still problematic. It was this same notion that caused the similar overture to be defeated in the presbyteries this year. Further, the self-description standard is vague and difficult to adjudicate in the courts. We came to wide agreement last year, and that agreement should be respected. Adopting an overture like this will just lead to more protracted debate in the denomination. This should be defeated. The arguments I laid out in this article from last year by-and-large still apply: https://www.semperref.org/articles/an-analysis-of-overture-15-to-amend-bco-7

OVERTURES	PRESBYTERY	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE	TITLE	RECOMMENDATION	CCB	RATIONALE
24	Chesapeake	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 8-3 to Include Language from the AIC Report on Human Sexuality for Elder Responsibilities	With reference to O23	No conflict	
25	Arizona	CCB, SJC, OC	Amend BCO 31 to Require Expedited and Conflict-free Investigations of Cases Involving Moral Failure or Victim(s)	TBD	Conflict	There is much to appreciate in this overture, but there are some issues to iron out. The CCB points out that "deference to legal authorities," is in conflict with our constitution. I would further argue that the issue of deference to criminal investigations is complex. The Church should not impede such an investigation, and has the Romans 13 duty to report abuse of minors, but my worry is that "deference" could also be construed by the accused, in the very likely case that the civil magistrate chooses not to criminally charge the accused, to argue that the Church should show deference to the civil magistrate and not pursue the case in the church courts. I would not support that, and think the language needs to be amended. I may propose such an amendment in the OC and update this advice.
26	Northwest Georgia	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 7-3 Regarding Titling of Unordained People	NO	No conflict	I do not support this amendment because it's too broad. The phrase, "titles connected to," is the sticking point. I might be supportive of an amendment that said that we shouldn't be calling unordained people pastors or elders. But what about a session appointed servant being styled as a shepherdess? What of a deaconess? What of Paul's teaching that older women (Greek: <i>presbutidas</i>) teach and train the younger women? We do not want to get into the business of trying policing biblical language out of the church in our zeal to maintain the biblical principles of a male only presbyterate.
27	Pacific Northwest	CCB, OC	Amend BCO 38-1 re Confessions and Offended Parties	YES	No conflict	I was able to give input over the course of this year to the author of this overture. I think this amendment is a very helpful addition to include the input of any victims in a case without process.
28	Calvary	OC, AC	Declare Message to All Nations a Faithful Expression of Biblical Polity Shaping the PCA	OC and AC Rec		While, in general, reaffirming something previously adopted is out of order according to Robert's Rules, I don't have any strong objection to this. Whatever the OC and AC recommends, I will likely support on the floor of GA.

OVERTURES	PRESBYTERY	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE	TITLE	RECOMMENDATION	CCB	RATIONALE
29	Southern New England	PCAF	Direct the Board of the PCA Foundation to Adopt a Policy on Risk Management	PCAF Rec		I find it curious that this overture is coming from a presbytery directing the action of a denominational agency. I will support the recommendation of the PCAF Permanent Committee. (NOTE: the PCAF did not reference this in their report to GA. Presumably they will have a recommendation on the floor. Go wit that).
	CRPR	CRPR	Cite Metro New York to appear before the SJC	NO		This year's RPR is originating a <i>BCO 40-5</i> request to cite Metropolitan New York Presbytery to appear before the SJC to answer for an apparent "important delinquency or grossly unconstitutional proceeding." My opposition to this measure is not to the substance of the issue in the minutes, but due to the fact that 1) it is procedurally out of order and 2) it sets a dangerous precedent. First, I believe it is procedurally out of order for two reasons, a) <i>BCO 40-5</i> describes a "grossly unconstitutional proceeding." What envisioned is a gross failure to follow constitutional process such that the normal modes for matters rising to the higher courts has been subverted. If there is a proper and more grassroots mode by which the matter can come to the higher courts, then 40-5 is not in order. There remains the option for two presbyteries to petition the GA for original jurisdiction or for the RPR to follow its normal process, which leads to the second reason for it being out of order. b) <i>RAO 16-10.c</i> lays out the procedure for RPR citing a presbytery to appear before the SJC: RPR must cite the presbytery to respond and then if their response is not satisfactory, then may refer the matter to the SJC. RPR has skipped a step here, and that step is an important one that allows for the Presbytery to consider and redress their error. Lastly, I believe that this sets a bad precedent of the RPR becoming a pre-judicial body where matters that were not resolved by complaint or appeal may be brought before the SJC, subverting the normal process. If this does get referred to the SJC, I hope that the SJC rules it out of order in order to put the lid back on Pandora's box, and if that doesn't happen, I hope we amend <i>BCO 40-5</i> .
						UPDATE: There seems to be a misunderstanding of my argument above, that I'm saying that <i>RAO 16-10.c</i> is the only way a <i>BCO 40-5</i> request can originate. That is not what I'm arguing. I'm arguing that <i>RAO 16-10.c</i> is the only way that a 40-5 citation can originate from RPR . In other words, while it is true, as some have said, that <i>RAO 16-10.c</i> does not govern <i>BCO 40-5</i> , <i>RAO 16-10.c</i> does govern how the RPR handles BCO 40-5 .

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CCB	CCB	Exception of substance to SJC minutes	NO			<p>The CCB, by a divided vote, has recommended an exception of substance for some case described in the minutes of the October 20-21, 2022 meeting. <i>RAO 17-1</i> (last paragraph) states that the General Assembly may order the SJC to retry the case if the CCB finds an exception of substance. In this instance, there was no case, so there can be no re-trying of it. Further, <i>OMSJC 16-1.b</i> states that the SJC panel has the authority to 1) determine if the case is in order, and 2) perform an investigation. This seems to give the SJC panel broad authority to recommend to the full SJC not to pursue a case. There was not a minority report from the SJC itself, showing that the SJC itself did not find an issue with their procedure. If anyone rises to a mic during the CCB report and attempts to move to order the SJC to retry this case, it should be voted down. I'm sure that more substantial arguments will be at the ready to be given from the floor.</p>