

**OVERTURE 9** from Ascension Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
Title: “Amend *RAO* 15-6.s.2), 3) Regarding the Number of Members of the  
Overtures Committee Required to File a Minority Report”

**Whereas**, minority reports from the Overtures Committee comprise an essential mechanism for allowing the General Assembly to hear and act upon different views that may arise in the Overtures Committee; and

**Whereas**, minority reports allow a minority of the Overtures Committee to clear their consciences by expressing their differences to the General Assembly; and

**Whereas**, *RAO* 15-6.s.2), 3) require that at least three ruling and three teaching elders sign a minority report; and

**Whereas**, the procedure by which the General Assembly hears and acts upon a minority report from the Overtures Committee (see 15-8.g) can be complex and time consuming ; and

**Whereas**, there is a need to maintain a reasonable balance between the rights of the minority of the Overtures Committee and the need of the General Assembly to conduct its business efficiently; and

**Whereas**, that balance can be harmed if a very small minority is able to force the General Assembly to follow the procedure of *RAO* 15-8.g; and

**Whereas**, at the 35<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (the first after the establishment of the Overtures Committee and related procedures) there were 67 members of the Overtures Committee (and a possible membership of 152), meaning that a 6 member minority would have comprised 8.95% of the members present (and 3.95% of the possible number of members); and

**Whereas**, at the 47<sup>th</sup> General Assembly there were 134 members of the Overtures Committee (and a possible membership of 176), meaning that a 6 member minority would have comprised 4.48% of the members present (and 3.41% of the possible number of members); and

**Whereas**, the continued growth in the number of presbyteries and of presbyteries sending both of their possible delegates to the Overtures Committee will likely mean that these percentages will continue to shrink; and

**Whereas**, it seems that a better way to balance the rights of the minority and those of the majority would be to tie the number of signatures needed for a minority report to a

## Overture 9, Ascension Presbytery

percentage rather than a fixed number; and

**Whereas**, a requirement that a minority report be signed by 10% of the membership of the Overtures Committee, at least 1/3 of whom must be ruling elders and at least 1/3 of whom must be teaching elders would restore the balance to very close to what it was at the 35<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, while still underscoring the parity between ruling and teaching elders; and

**Whereas**, at the 47<sup>th</sup> General Assembly this would have required 14 of the 134 members to have signed any minority report (of whom at least 5 would have had to have been ruling elders and 5 would have had to have been teaching elders); and

**Whereas**, a requirement that 10% of the Overtures Committee agree to a minority report seems to be a reasonable threshold for invoking the procedures of *RAO* 15-8.g;

**Therefore be it resolved** that the Presbytery of the Ascension hereby overtures the 48<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to amend *RAO* 15-6.s.2), 3) by deleting from both paragraphs the words “signed by at least three (3) teaching elder members of the committee and three (3) ruling elder members of the committee,” and replacing them with “signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the members of the committee of whom at least one-third (1/3) must be teaching elders and at least one-third (1/3) must be ruling elders,” (~~strike-through~~ for deletions; underlining for new wording):

### *RAO* 15-6

#### s. Minority Reports.

- 1) With respect to any recommendation, prior to a recess or adjournment of the Overtures Committee following the adoption of said recommendation, any member of the committee may indicate an intention to file a minority report by giving notice to the chairman.
- 2) Written notice of intent to file a minority report, ~~signed by at least three teaching elder members of the committee and three ruling elder members of the committee,~~ signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the total number of votes cast on the applicable item by members of the committee of whom at least 4% of such total votes cast must be teaching elders and at least 4% of such total votes cast must be ruling elders, must be delivered to the Office of the Stated Clerk within one hour of any recess or adjournment following the adoption of said recommendation. The Office of the Stated Clerk shall inform the chairman of the Overtures Committee of such notice as soon as practicable.

- 3) ~~The printed minority report, signed by at least three teaching elder members of the committee and three ruling elder members of the committee,~~ signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the total number of votes cast on the applicable item by members of the committee of whom at least 4% of such total votes cast must be teaching elders and at least 4% of such total votes cast must be ruling elders, must be presented to the chairman of the committee as soon as practicable, but in no case less than fifteen (15) minutes before the recommendation in question is brought to the floor.

So that the revised paragraphs would read as follows:

- 2) Written notice of intent to file a minority report, signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the members of the Committee of whom at least one-third (1/3) must be teaching elders and at least one-third (1/3) must be ruling elders, must be delivered to the Office of the Stated Clerk within one hour of any recess or adjournment following the adoption of said recommendation. The Office of the Stated Clerk shall inform the chairman of the Overtures Committee of such notice as soon as is practicable.
- 3) The printed minority report, signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the members of the Committee of whom at least one-third (1/3) must be teaching elders and at least one-third (1/3) must be ruling elders, must be presented to the chairman of the committee as soon as practicable, but in no case less than fifteen (15) minutes before the recommendation in question is brought to the floor.

*Adopted by the Presbytery of the Ascension at its stated meeting, November 2, 2020*  
*Attested by: /s/ RE Frederick R. Neikirk, stated clerk*