

## The Path of a GA Overture

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An important part of the General Assembly's (GA) work each year is responding to overtures. According to the PCA's "Rules of Assembly Operations" (RAO) an overture is a request, ordinarily from a presbytery, that the GA take a specific action. Typically, a member of a presbytery or a church session within it, proposes an overture to the presbytery. The presbytery then approves the overture for presentation to the Assembly (possibly with amendments) or rejects it.

If the overture is rejected, the individual or session may still present it to the GA; they must, however, acknowledge that it was presented — and rejected — by their presbytery.

Overtures that ask for a change in the "Book of Church Order" (BCO) or the RAO must be received by the Stated Clerk's office 60 days prior to the Assembly. This allows time for the Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) to review them for compatibility with the Constitution (the Westminster Standards plus the BCO) and the RAO.

Other overtures must be received at least 31 days prior to the GA.

When the clerk receives an overture, he refers it to the appropriate committee or agency as outlined in the RAO. Most overtures are referred to the Overtures Committee (OC), which consists of a teaching elder and ruling elder from each presbytery. Those that relate to the work of a specific program committee or agency board are referred to that committee or board. These committees or boards recommend to the GA how it should respond to the overture. Normally, the recommendation is that the Assembly either take the proposed action (answer the overture in the affirmative) or that it does not take the action (answer it in the negative). Occasionally, they may recommend that an overture be approved with amendments, answered by reference to action taken on a similar overture, or referred to the originating presbytery "for perfection."

A minority of the Overtures Committee or the Committee of Commissioners for a program committee or agency, may offer a substitute recommendation which, if approved by the Assembly, becomes the recommendation to be acted upon. Such recommendations may not be amended by the Assembly; they must be accepted, rejected, or returned to the committee for further review.