

Overture Process Guide for the 226th General Assembly (2024)

Overview

The guidelines for presenting overtures are found in the Standing Rules of the General Assembly¹ and include the following key points:

- Overtures **must be approved by a presbytery or a synod** and shall request the General Assembly to take a particular action or approve/endorse a particular statement/resolution.
- Overtures **must be submitted on time** to the Office of the General Assembly.
- The originating presbytery or synod **may appoint an Overture Advocate**.

Research and Preparation

Before submitting an overture, there are certain steps required by the Standing Rules. These state that the Stated Clerk of a presbytery or synod considering an overture to the General Assembly shall²:

- **Consult with the Office of the General Assembly regarding past and current actions** on similar items of business, including:
 - **Examining the most recently published Minutes of the General Assembly or pc-biz.org** to determine if a similar overture has already been passed.
 - **Determine whether the desired action has been disapproved** by a previous assembly.
 - **Determine whether a similar overture has already been proposed** in order that the presbytery or synod may consider concurring with the existing overture.

For overtures with a recommendation(s) that affect the work or budget of a General Assembly entity(ies), **evidence must be submitted at the same time as the overture showing the mid council has consulted with the entity(ies) affected**. This evidence can be included at the end of the overture file when submitted. **If evidence is not submitted, the overture shall not be considered.**³

Consultations with the Office of the General Assembly may take place by phone, e-mail, or personal conversation. To identify the appropriate partner and begin discussion, reach out to kate.duffert@pcusa.org.

¹ A.3

² A.3.c

³ A.3.d(5)

Formatting an Overture

Recommendation

The recommendation should always be at the beginning of the overture so that those reading are made aware of the intended outcomes from the start. Recommendations should be worded with **specific, concise directives** so that the General Assembly can make a clear, informed decision and so that financial implications, if any, can be accurately assessed.

“The Presbytery [or Synod] of _____ overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to...”

Rationale

The rationale section should be as concise as possible and **provide insight into the reasons for the recommendation**. Tell the reader, in short paragraphs:

- What is the motivation behind this overture?
- In what ways should current programs or policies change to better address this overture’s needs?
- What additional factors should be considered as the overture is being discussed?

Material included in the rationale is intended to provide context and information for voting members of the General Assembly. While an important part of the overture, **the text of the rationale is not considered part of any assembly action** and thus, cannot be amended by commissioners and/or advisory delegates. Additionally, any content that is not in the recommendation is not considered official policy should the overture be approved by the assembly.

Length

The total number of words included in the recommendation and rationale of an overture shall **not exceed 1500 words**.⁴

Consultation

Should an overture impact the work and/or budget of an assembly entity(ies), evidence of consultation should be included when the overture is submitted. At the end of the overture document, Stated Clerks should include **either**:

- an image of written/electronic correspondence
- **OR** a signed statement naming the conversation partners.

This documented evidence of consultation does not impact the overture’s word count. Additionally, it will not be included in the official documentation of the overture, but rather will be filed for appropriate due diligence.

⁴ A.3.c(2)
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Submitting an Overture

Overtures shall be **submitted directly into PC-Biz through the Portal**. Stated Clerks will click the “General Assembly” tab in the menu. This will enable Stated Clerks to click through to the overture submission page. There the Stated Clerk will complete the form and attach a Word document for submittal. **Please do not attach PDFs as staff must be able to edit and format the overture.**

Once the overture has been received, the Stated Clerk will be able to see it documented in the Portal. A status bar will be visible to Stated Clerks and will be regularly updated regarding the state of the overture from editing to posting. If for any reason you have difficulty with submitting your overture or tracking its progress, contact Kate Trigger Duffert at kate.duffert@pcusa.org.

Concurrences

To be considered by the assembly, every overture from a presbytery must receive at least one concurrence. **This concurrence is due by the same deadline as the overture itself.**⁵ Therefore, it is advised that overtures be submitted in advance of the deadline and that mid council leaders coordinate with other presbyteries to prepare concurrences by the applicable date.

Concurrences may be submitted through PC-Biz when logging in through the Portal. Stated Clerks will click the “Add Concurrence” button next to the appropriate overture.

To concur with an item of business, the Stated Clerk must upload **one or more** of the following:

- Presbytery minutes which document the vote to concur,
- **OR** an overture with an identical recommendation and additional rationale.

If submitting a concurrence with additional rationale, **the total number of words for both the identical recommendation and the additional rationale shall ordinarily not exceed 1500 words.**⁶

All overtures submitted to the General Assembly from a presbytery must have a concurrence from at least one other mid council. **Overtures not receiving a timely concurrence will not be referred to the General Assembly.** Overtures from synods do not require a concurrence as their composition includes multiple presbyteries.⁷

The **first concurrence to an overture must be received before the appropriate deadline** (i.e. a concurrence to an overture seeking to amend the *Book of Order* must also be submitted by the 120-day deadline). **All subsequent concurrences may be submitted until the 45-day deadline.**

While most concurrences are submitted by a mid council directly, **the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly may elect to label a submitted overture as a concurrence** to an item of business submitted at an earlier date if the recommendation is considered to be exceedingly similar.

⁵ A.3.b

⁶ A.3.b

⁷ A.3.b

Overture Advocates

Each presbytery or synod submitting an overture shall name one Overture Advocate. The Overture Advocate will access the relevant committee’s meeting virtually, preparing either a pre-recorded video or joining the committee’s Zoom meeting.

Stated Clerks can add the name of an Overture Advocate to a submitted overture via PC-Biz. Before doing so, Stated Clerks should confirm with the Overture Advocate that they are available during the assembly committee dates or willing to submit a pre-recorded video. Additionally, **advocates must have a PC-Biz account prior to being added by the Stated Clerk**. Potential Overture Advocates should confirm the name and e-mail address on their account to ensure the correct person is assigned as the advocate and that Office of the General Assembly staff can reach out to them for preparation and access to the committee.

For additional information or to ask further questions, contact:

Kate Trigger Duffert

Manager for General Assembly Business and Per Capita Promotion

kate.duffert@pcusa.org

Deadlines

180-day Deadline	December 28, 2023	-Commissioners and Advisory Delegates submitted to OGA
120-day Deadline	February 26, 2024	-Overtures requesting amendments to/interpretation of Book of Order -First concurrence to overtures requesting amendments to/interpretation of Book of Order
60-day Deadline	April 26, 2024	-Overtures with financial implications -First concurrence to overtures with financial implications
45-day Deadline	May 11, 2024	-All other overtures -All concurrences

Overture Process- Step by Step

- 1. Review past and current business for similar actions.**
- 2. Write the recommendation and rationale.**
- 3. Consult with affected entity(ies), if necessary.**
- 4. After mid council approval, submit the overture through the Stated Clerk's Portal.**
- 5. Receive at least one concurrence by the overture's due date.**
- 6. Appoint an Overture Advocate.**

Frequently Asked Questions

When submitting a concurrence, must the Stated Clerk submit a file with the text of an identical recommendation and additional rationale?

No. If a mid council has voted to concur with an overture and not include additional rationale, the Stated Clerk may submit a copy of draft minutes listing the vote total as proof of concurrence. These minutes do not have to have been approved by the submission. If minutes are unavailable, the Stated Clerk may submit the following signed statement:

At its (date) meeting, the Presbytery of _____ voted to concur with overture (number and name of overture).

Who is responsible for ensuring that an overture has concurrences?

The Office of the General Assembly does not solicit concurrences. Presbyteries are encouraged to contact other mid councils to consider concurring with their overtures. Stated Clerks should also make an effort to regularly review PC-Biz to see recently posted overtures that may be worth considering for concurrence in their contexts.

Why don't overtures from synods need a concurrence?

An overture adopted by a synod must be voted on by commissioners representing multiple presbyteries. Thus, it has support from more than one presbytery by definition.

Who brings an overture to presbytery for concurrence?

Every presbytery has a different process for bringing business before the council. Concurrences should be treated as a normal item of business for the presbytery meeting.

If our presbytery concurs with another presbytery's overture, do we name an overture advocate?

A presbytery or synod that concurs with an overture from another presbytery or synod may send one overture advocate to assist in presenting the matter to the assembly committee.

Can an overture include images or content other than written words?

Yes. Images may be included in the Word document submitted. An overture may also include hyperlinks to resources in its rationale. These links will appear in PC-Biz for readers to click through to view the additional content. As the content is hosted on other platforms, the Office of the General Assembly cannot monitor or maintain accuracy of the linked information.

Will the overture be translated into other languages?

Yes. All overtures will have both their recommendations and rationales translated into Spanish and Korean. Any text in an image or in linked materials, however, will not be translated.

If a presbytery or synod has voted to approve an overture, but consultation with an affected entity has not occurred, can the overture still be submitted?

Stated Clerks should do everything in their power to make sure that any overture that is being voted on by the presbytery or synod has received consultation prior to voting. This consultation may help to inform and even strengthen the overture before discussion. If, however, an overture was approved and consultation has not yet occurred, the Stated Clerk should contact kate.duffert@pcusa.org in the Office of the General Assembly to establish consultation prior to submission. While these post-approval consultations will not inform the item of business, they may provide context for the affected entity(ies) as they prepare to write comments on the item. Items that impact the work of an assembly entity(ies) that do not include evidence of consultation at the time of submission shall not be considered by the General Assembly according to Standing Rule A.3.d(5).

Where can I find the Standing Rules of the General Assembly?

The Standing Rules are a part of the *Manual of the General Assembly* and are available on PC-Biz on the “Resources” tab.

For additional information or to ask further questions, contact:

Kate Trigger Duffert

Manager for General Assembly Business and Per Capita Promotion

kate.duffert@pcusa.org

Overture Online Submission Visual Guide

Overture Submission Home Page

Stated Clerks logged in through the Portal will see the following Overture Submission page. The page will enable you to submit overtures and follow the progress of overtures that have been submitted by your presbytery/synod as well as those submitted by others.

The screenshot shows the 'Overtures' submission page for Abingdon Presbytery. It features a yellow header with a 'Submit Overtures' button. Below the header, there is a 'Welcome to the overtures submission page for the upcoming 226th General Assembly (2024)' message. This is followed by 'Information from the Standing Rules' with a link to the manual. A list of five rules (1-5) details submission requirements, including deadlines and financial implications. A 'Please note' section provides contact information for Kate Trigger Dufford. An 'Important Dates' section lists key deadlines from December 2023 to May 2024. At the bottom, there are two status sections: 'Abingdon Presbytery Overtures' (No overtures have been submitted) and 'Other Overtures' (No overtures have been posted).

Submit Overture Window

The Submit Overture window enables you to upload applicable files for your overture. In order to successfully submit your overture, you must click the appropriate boxes as a means of confirming your preparation. You may also select your Overture Advocates at this point. However, it is not required for submittal. Note: You may add/edit Overture Advocates at any time, but they must be registered as a PC-Biz user.

The screenshot shows the 'Submit Overture' window. It has a dark grey header with a 'Submit Overtures' button. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column contains the same 'Welcome' message and 'Information from the Standing Rules' as the home page. The middle column is a form titled 'Does this overture:' with four checkboxes: 'Propose an amendment to the Constitution? (225 days left)', 'Require an interpretation by the General Assembly of the Book of Order? (225 days left)', 'Have financial implications for current or future years' budgets? (295 days left)', and 'Have a recommendation(s) that affects the work or budget of a General Assembly entity(ies)?'. Below these is a radio button for 'Include evidence that affected entity(ies) have been consulted?'. There is a text input field for 'Title:' and an 'Upload File' button next to a 'No file selected' message. Below that is an 'Overture Advocate:' section with a text input field for 'Enter first name, last name, or email' and 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons. The right column contains the same 'Please note' and 'Important Dates' sections as the home page. At the bottom, there are two status sections: 'Abingdon Presbytery Overtures' (No overtures have been submitted) and 'Other Overtures' (No overtures have been posted).

Tracking, Concurrences, and Editing Advocates

All overtures submitted by your presbytery/synod will be visible in their own section at the top of your home page. There you can see the “Status” of the overture and add or edit Overture Advocates. The “Other Overtures” section enables you to see business posted from other presbyteries/synods. The “Add Concurrence” button allows you to easily concur on behalf of your council.

Overtures New York City Presbytery

Welcome to the overtures submission page for the upcoming 226th General Assembly (2024).

Information from the following Rules:
[https://www.pcusa.org/na_email_attachments/updates/updates_officials_2023.pdf]

- (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 G-6.02) must be uploaded 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 uploaded no later than 60 days prior to the convening of the General Assembly. Overtures with financial implications not received within the designated time limit shall not be considered.
- (3) All other overtures intended for consideration by the General Assembly shall be uploaded no later than 45 days before the convening of the General Assembly.
- (4) Overtures not received within the designated time limits or those which have not received a first concurrence by the overture's due date shall not be considered.
- (5) Presbyteries or synods submitting overtures with a recommendation(s) that affects the work or budget of a General Assembly entity(ies) shall submit evidence that the affected entity(ies) has (have) been consulted. If such evidence is not submitted, the Stated Clerk shall recommend that the overture be referred to a future session of the General Assembly so that consultation may take place.

For information on how to contact impacted entities or other details on business submission, contact Kate Trigger Duffert at kate.duffert@pcusa.org

Please note:
- Your uploaded file will only be visible to Presbyterian Church (USA) staff responsible for managing, editing, and translation items of business.
- Previously submitted items referred from the 225th General Assembly to the 226th General Assembly will not appear in this submission hub. Contact Kate Trigger Duffert with questions regarding those items of business.

Important Dates:
180-day deadline for commissioner and advisory delegate names is December 28, 2023.
165-day deadline for deadline and word length extension requests is January 12, 2024.
120-day deadline for overtures requiring amendments to the Constitution or Book of Order and all agency/committee reports is February 26, 2024.
90-day deadline for overtures with financial implications is April 26, 2024.
45-day deadline for all other overtures, all concurrences, and comments is May 11, 2024.
30-day deadline for the State of nominations is May 26, 2024.

Please contact Kate Duffert at kate.duffert@pcusa.org if you need further assistance.

[Submit Overtures](#)

New York City Presbytery Overtures
No overtures have been submitted.

Other Overtures

Item	Item Title	Sponsor	Concurrences	Advocates	Actions
[OVT-001]	Sample Document	Albany Presbytery			Add Concurrence

Submit Concurrence

The “Submit Concurrence” window requires a file to be uploaded in order to register a concurrence. This file may be either minutes from a meeting which include a recorded vote to concur or an overture with an identical recommendation.

Overtures New York City Presbytery

Submit Concurrence

New York City Presbytery attests that a meeting had been convened to vote on concurrence with this overture. Documentation is hereby attached with this concurrence.

[Upload File](#) No file selected

[OK](#) [Cancel](#)

(4) Overtures not received within the designated time limits or those which have not received a first concurrence by the overture's due date shall not be considered.

(5) Presbyteries or synods submitting overtures with a recommendation(s) that affects the work or budget of a General Assembly entity(ies) shall submit evidence that the affected entity(ies) has (have) been consulted. If such evidence is not submitted, the Stated Clerk shall recommend that the overture be referred to a future session of the General Assembly so that consultation may take place.

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