

1 **OVERTURE 23** from Missouri Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
2 “Amend BCO 13-6, 21-4, and 24-1 to Require Background Checks for Church Office”  
3

4 [Editorial note: This overture is similar to Overtures 6, 16, 17, and 24.]  
5

6 **Whereas** the qualifications for elders and deacons includes being “above reproach” (1 Tim.  
7 3:2 and Titus 1:7), “self-controlled” (1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8), “not violent but gentle”  
8 (1 Tim. 3:3), “not...quick-tempered” (Titus 1:7), and “proven blameless” (1 Tim.  
9 3:10); and

10  
11 **Whereas** the qualification of every believer is to “keep your conduct among the Gentiles  
12 honorable” (1 Pet. 2:12); and

13  
14 **Whereas** our confession warns leaders against the “careless exposing, or leaving [those in  
15 their care] to wrong, temptation, and danger” (*WLC* 130); and

16  
17 **Whereas** the *Book of Church Order* states that church courts perform “a careful examination”  
18 including “personal character” (21-4.c; 24-1.a) and “Christian experience” (13-6); and

19  
20 **Whereas** the report of the Ad Interim Committee on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault to  
21 the Forty-ninth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (the “DASA  
22 Report”) says, “Churches protect their members with policies that take into  
23 consideration the most vulnerable in the congregation” by, at a minimum,  
24 “Presbyteries enacting policies to *require background checks* and abuse training for all  
25 ordinands and transfers, and policies to protect whistleblowers against retribution”  
26 (emphasis added, DASA Report, *M49GA*, p. 949); and

27  
28 **Whereas** the 42nd General Assembly resolved that churches prevent types of abuse “by  
29 screening staff and volunteers” (Overture 6, *M42 GA*, p. 59,); and

30  
31 **Whereas** the 42nd General Assembly resolved that churches “must cooperate with those  
32 authorities as they ‘bear the sword’ to punish those who do evil ‘in such an effectual  
33 manner as that no person be suffered . . . to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or  
34 injury to any other person whatsoever’ (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14; *WCF* 23.3);”  
35

36 **Therefore, be it resolved** that *BCO* 13-6 be amended by adding language as follows  
37 (underlining for additions, ~~strike through~~ for deletions):  
38

39 13-6. When a minister is ~~Ministers~~ seeking admission to a Presbytery from  
40 another Presbytery ~~other Presbyteries~~ in the Presbyterian Church in  
41 America, or from another denomination, the receiving Presbytery shall  
42 cause a state and federal level fingerprint-based background check to be  
43 performed on the minister. The results of the background check shall be  
44 shared with the members of the receiving Presbytery, with the members of  
45 the dismissing Presbytery, and with the calling church or other

1           organization that is calling the minister. He shall be examined on Christian  
2           experience, and also touching ~~his~~ ~~their~~ views in theology, the Sacraments,  
3           and church government. If applicants come from other denominations, the  
4           Presbytery shall examine them thoroughly in knowledge and views as  
5           required by *BCO* 21-4 and require them to answer in the affirmative the  
6           questions put to candidates at their ordination. Ordained ministers from  
7           other denominations being considered by Presbyteries for reception may  
8           come under the extraordinary provisions set forth in *BCO* 21-4.  
9           Presbyteries shall also...

10  
11   **Therefore, be it further resolved** that *BCO* 21 be amended by adding a new 21-4.b, and  
12   renumbering the succeeding paragraphs (underlining for additions):

13  
14           21-4. b. Prior to ordination, the examining Presbytery shall cause a state  
15           and federal level fingerprint-based background check to be performed on  
16           each candidate. The results of the background check shall be shared with  
17           the Presbytery and with the calling church. The fee for the background  
18           check shall be paid for by the calling church or organization, or in the case  
19           of the ordinand being an evangelist, the Presbytery shall pay the fee.

20  
21   **Therefore, be it further resolved** that *BCO* 24-1 be amended by adding language as follows  
22   (underlining for additions):

23  
24           24-1. ...set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Session shall cause a state and federal  
25           level fingerprint-based background check to be performed on each candidate eligible  
26           for election. The cost shall be covered by the nominee's church. The results of the  
27           background check may be shared with the congregation if deemed prudent by the  
28           Session. Nominees for the office of ruling elder and/or deacon shall receive  
29           instruction...

30  
31   So that the amended paragraphs will read as follows:

32  
33           **13-6.** When a minister is seeking admission to a Presbytery from another  
34           Presbytery in the Presbyterian Church in America, or from another  
35           denomination, the receiving Presbytery shall cause a state and federal level  
36           fingerprint-based background check to be performed on the minister. The  
37           results of the background check shall be shared with the members of the  
38           receiving Presbytery, with the members of the dismissing Presbytery, and  
39           with the calling church or other organization that is calling the minister.  
40           He shall be examined on Christian experience, and also touching his views  
41           in theology, the Sacraments, and church government. If applicants come  
42           from other denominations, the Presbytery shall examine them thoroughly  
43           in knowledge and views as required by *BCO* 21-4 and require them to  
44           answer in the affirmative the questions put to candidates at their  
45           ordination. Ordained ministers from other denominations may come under

1 the extraordinary provisions set forth in *BCO 21-4*. Presbyteries shall also  
2 require ordained ministers coming from other denominations to state the  
3 specific instances in which they may differ with the *Confession of Faith*  
4 and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions, which  
5 differences the court shall judge in accordance with *BCO 21-4* (see *BCO*  
6 *21-4.e,f*).

7  
8 **21-4.b.** Prior to ordination, the examining Presbytery shall cause a state and federal  
9 level fingerprint-based background check to be performed on each candidate. The cost  
10 shall be covered by the nominee's church. The results of the background check shall  
11 be shared with the Presbytery and with the calling church. The fee for the background  
12 check shall be paid for by the calling church or organization, or in the case of the  
13 ordinand being an evangelist, the Presbytery shall pay the fee.

14  
15 **24-1.** Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon in the  
16 following manner: At such times as determined by the Session, communicant members  
17 of the congregation may submit names to the Session, keeping in mind that each  
18 prospective officer should be an active male member who meets the qualifications set  
19 forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Session shall cause a state and federal level  
20 fingerprint-based background check to be performed on each candidate eligible for  
21 election. The results of the background check may be shared with the congregation if  
22 deemed prudent by the Session. Nominees for the office of ruling elder and/or deacon  
23 shall receive instruction in the qualifications and work of the office. Each nominee  
24 shall be examined in:

25  
26 *Adopted by Missouri Presbytery at its special meeting of February 27, 2024.*  
27 *Attested by RE Robert Wilkinson, stated clerk*