

1 **OVERTURE 31** from the New River Presbytery (to CCB, OC, AC, CC, CDM,
2 “Amend *BCO* 14-1 Regarding Changes in CTS, GEN, MNA, MTW,
3 Permanent Committee and Agency Policy” PCAF, RH, RUF)
4

5 **Whereas**, *BCO* 14-1.7 states, “The Assembly’s committees are to serve and not to direct any
6 Church judicatories. They are not to establish policy, but rather execute policy
7 established by the General Assembly”; and
8

9 **Whereas**, the interpretation of the current wording of *BCO* 14-1.7 is disputed regarding the
10 authority of permanent committees and agencies¹ to establish operational policies, as
11 evidenced by lengthy floor debates at recent General Assembly meetings, such as the
12 debate over Reformed University Fellowship’s (RUF) new Affiliation Agreement at
13 the 50th General Assembly in 2023, and the debate about the Mission to the World
14 (MTW) Manual at the 48th General Assembly in 2021; and
15

16 **Whereas**, the General Assembly, due to its limited time, cannot feasibly review every minor
17 change to a permanent committee's financial, operational, and personnel policies, such
18 as per diem reimbursements for travel, which would be better addressed by the
19 permanent committees themselves; and
20

21 **Whereas**, the use of the singular “policy” as opposed to “policies” suggests that it is not the
22 intention of *BCO* 14-1.7 for the General Assembly to determine every operational
23 policy, but rather to set the general mission of the committees and agencies; and
24

25 **Whereas**, the composition of permanent committees is already determined by the General
26 Assembly through the Nominating Committee and the floor vote, ensuring that these
27 committees are representative of the General Assembly; and
28

29 **Whereas**, the General Assembly effectively exercises review and control of the committees
30 and agencies through the committees of commissioners, which have the responsibility
31 to review the minutes, reports, and recommendations of the permanent committees and
32 agencies; and
33

34 **Whereas**, in the case that a permanent committee or agency attempts to implement a policy
35 that is grossly unconstitutional or out of accord with the teachings of the Presbyterian
36 Church in America, the General Assembly can be notified of such actions through the
37 committee of commissioners’ reports and recommendations and can act on such a
38 report (see *RAO* 14-1, 14-3, and especially 14-11); and
39

40 **Whereas**, the 50th General Assembly added section 4 to *RAO* 4-21.d, which reads: “A
41 recording of information sufficient to demonstrate the Committee's or Board’s
42 implementation of instructions received from General Assembly and of material

¹ The *BCO* does not capitalize “committee” or “agency.” In contrast, the *RAO* capitalizes both. The *BCO* convention is used here.

1 policies and material policy changes adopted by the Committee or Board in that year”;
2 and

3
4 **Whereas**, this addition suggests that the 50th General Assembly interpreted *BCO* 14 such that
5 Committees and Boards *may* create and make changes to their policy, including
6 “material” (i.e., “important; essential; relevant”) policies and policy changes, and that
7 only changes that are “material” are necessary to record in their minutes; and
8

9 **Whereas**, the General Assembly wishes to maintain its ability to direct the mission of the
10 permanent committees and agencies; and
11

12 **Whereas**, it is necessary to clarify the authority of permanent committees and agencies to
13 create and execute operational, financial, and personnel policies while preserving the
14 General Assembly's oversight of these committees and agencies; and
15

16 **Whereas**, it is desirable to establish a clear framework for the General Assembly's review and
17 control of permanent committees and agencies without hindering their ability to carry
18 out day-to-day operations and decisions; and
19

20 **Whereas**, the proposed changes aim to provide clarity, efficiency, and accountability in the
21 functioning of permanent committees and agencies while preserving the constitutional
22 authority and oversight of the General Assembly;
23

24 **Therefore, be it resolved** to amend the Book of Church Order by amending *BCO* 14-1.7 as
25 follows: [Proposed additions underlined, and deletions noted by strike out.]
26

27 *BCO* 14-1

28 7. The Assembly's committees are to serve and not to direct any Church
29 judicatories. They are not to establish ~~policy, but rather execute policy~~
30 established by the General Assembly or modify their ministry priorities or
31 mission, which may only be determined by the General Assembly. However,
32 they may create and execute operational policies necessary for the
33 administration of their responsibilities. Policies and material changes
34 thereunto must be recorded in the committee or agency's minutes for review
35 and control by the General Assembly (cf. *RAO* 14-1, 14-3, 14-11).
36

37 **Furthermore**,

38
39 **Whereas**, the existence of substantial organizational apparatuses used to fulfill permanent
40 committees' and agencies' missions (e.g., RUF, the permanent committee, versus RUF
41 the organization that fulfills the mission of RUF, the permanent committee), is not
42 reflected in our *BCO* or *RAO*; and
43

44 **Whereas**, these organizations are sometimes mistakenly confused for permanent committee
45 “subcommittees” referred to in *RAO* 4-10; and

1 **Whereas**, proper oversight of the operation of these organizations is hindered by the lack of
2 reference to them in our *BCO* and *RAO*; and
3

4 **Whereas**, oversight of these organizations resides with their respective permanent committee
5 or agency, but review and control resides with their respective committee of
6 commissioners;
7

8 **Therefore, be it resolved** to amend the Book of Church Order by adding a new *BCO* 14-1.8,
9 and renumbering *BCO* 14-1.8-15as follows: [Proposed additions underlined and
10 deletions noted by strike out.]
11

12 8. Committees and agencies may, in the course of fulfilling their mission,
13 create organizations that remain entirely under the oversight of the
14 committee or agency. These organizations shall only establish or change
15 standing operational policies with approval from the committee or agency.
16 The approval of these policies shall be recorded in the committee or
17 agency's minutes for review and control by the General Assembly (cf. *RAO*
18 14-1, 14-3, 14-11).

19 ~~8-9.~~ The committees serve the Church through the duties assigned by the
20 General Assembly.

21 [renumber *BCO* 14-1.9-15 to *BCO* 14-1.10-16]
22
23

24 The full text of *BCO* 14-1 shall read as follows:
25

26 14-1. The General Assembly is the highest court of this Church, and
27 represents in one body all the churches thereof. It bears the title of The General
28 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and constitutes the bond of
29 union, peace and correspondence among all its congregations and courts.
30

31 Principles for the Organization of the Assembly:

- 32 1. The Church is responsible for carrying out the Great Commission.
- 33 2. The initiative for carrying out the Great Commission belongs to the Church
34 at every court level, and the Assembly is responsible to encourage and
35 promote the fulfillment of this ministry by the various courts.
- 36 3. The work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work,
37 being implemented at the General Assembly level through equally essential
38 committees.
- 39 4. It is the responsibility of every member and every member congregation to
40 support the whole work of the denomination as they be led in their
41 conscience held captive to the Word of God.
- 42 5. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly to evaluate needs and
43 resources, and to act on priorities for the most effective fulfillment of the
44 Great Commission.

- 1 6. The Church recognizes the right of individuals and congregations to labor
2 through other agencies in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- 3 7. The Assembly's committees are to serve and not to direct any Church
4 judicatories. They are not to establish or modify their ministry priorities or
5 mission, which may only be determined by the General Assembly.
6 However, they may create and execute operational policies necessary for
7 the administration of their responsibilities. Policies and material changes
8 thereunto must be recorded in the committee or agency's minutes for
9 review and control by the General Assembly (cf. *RAO* 14-1, 14-3, 14-11).
- 10 8. Committees and Agencies may, in the course of fulfilling their mission,
11 create organizations which remain entirely under the oversight of the
12 Committee or Agency. These organizations shall not have the authority to
13 establish or change operational policies without approval from the
14 Committee or Agency. The approval of these policies, along with the
15 policies themselves, shall be recorded in the Committee or Agency's
16 minutes for review and control by the General Assembly (cf. *RAO* 14-1,
17 14-3, 14-11).
- 18 9. The committees serve the Church through the duties assigned by the
19 General Assembly.
20 [renumber *BCO* 14-1.9-15 to *BCO* 14-1.10-16]

21
22 *Adopted by New River Presbytery at its 150th stated meeting, March 2, 2024*

23 *Attested by /s/ TE Kurt Gray, stated clerk*