

1 **OVERTURE 31** from the Houston Metro Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 31-10 to Require Vote of the Entire Court to Suspend an Officer’s
3 Official Functions during Process”
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5 **Be it resolved** that *BCO* 31-10 is amended as follows (underlining for additions):
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7 **31-10.** When a member of a church court is under process, all his official functions
8 may be administratively suspended at the court’s discretion; but this shall never be
9 done in the way of censure, and this requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the entire
10 court, even if the process is being conducted by a commission.
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12 So that *BCO* 31-10 as amended would read:
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14 **31-10.** When a member of a church court is under process, all his official functions
15 may be administratively suspended at the court’s discretion; but this shall never be
16 done in the way of censure, and this requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the court
17 itself, even if the process is being conducted by a commission.
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19 **RATIONALE:**
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21 There are occasions when a church officer (that is, “a member of a church court”) comes under
22 process. Such process could potentially take a period of time to conclude. At the same time,
23 it may be necessary for a number of reasons, including the honor of religion, the health of the
24 court, and even the well-being of the accused, to suspend the accused from his official
25 functions. Current *BCO* 31-10 rightly points out that this is not a censure but is only an
26 administrative suspension.
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28 Often process is conducted by a *BCO* 15-3 commission rather than the entire court. Such a
29 commission may be relatively small when compared to the entire court: a Presbytery
30 commission must be at least four (*BCO* 15-2), but a Session commission could be as few as
31 two members. In the case of a Teaching Elder, suspending him could result in a significant
32 effect on both the Teaching Elder and his congregation. For example, the church could be
33 required to find pulpit supply during the Teaching Elder’s suspension, or a church could be
34 unable to celebrate the sacraments if another Teaching Elder is unavailable to them.
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36 Because a commission is acting *as the court* in a case of process, the provision of *BCO* 31-10
37 can currently be enacted by the members of the commission itself, rather than the larger court.
38 In the case of a six-member commission, for example, that would mean that four members of
39 the larger court could suspend a man from “all his official functions.” This could occur even
40 in a Presbytery which had membership of more than 100 (Teaching Elders and Ruling Elder
41 commissioners). If a court is going to take the step of suspending an officer from “all his
42 official functions,” this should be done by a greater number of officers of the court than a 2/3
43 majority of a commission.
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Overture 31, Houston Metro Presbytery

- 1 *Adopted by Houston Metro Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 14, 2025*
- 2 *Attested by RE /s/ Eric Manthei, stated clerk*