

1 **OVERTURE 27** from the Westminster Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 34-1 Regarding GA Assuming Original Jurisdiction”
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4 **Whereas**, *BCO* 34-1 has been proposed for amendment eleven (11) times in the history of the
5 PCA, yet none of those amendments have been ratified by the General Assembly; and
6

7 **Whereas**, the serious nature of *BCO* 34-1 is to protect the Church as a whole in matters
8 concerning doctrine or public scandal, yet in its current form it provides little practical
9 means for other Presbyteries to have the General Assembly assume original
10 jurisdiction in such cases; and
11

12 **Whereas**, Preliminary Principle #3 states: “Our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the
13 visible Church, which is His body, has appointed officers not only to preach the Gospel
14 and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline for the preservation both
15 of truth and duty. It is incumbent upon these officers and upon the whole Church in
16 whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing
17 in all cases the rules contained in the Word of God”; and
18

19 **Whereas**, these “officers” are not limited to those serving in a particular court, but include all
20 the officers of the whole Church acting corporately for its edification and purity; and
21

22 **Whereas**, the current low numerical threshold for triggering original jurisdiction does not
23 reflect the gravity of such cases or stipulate the kind of action required by the initiating
24 presbyteries; and
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26 **Whereas**, at the founding of the PCA, the request of two Presbyteries represented
27 approximately 12.5% of the whole, whereas today it represents only about 2.3% of
28 presbyteries, an unbalanced ratio given the seriousness of assuming original
29 jurisdiction; and
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31 **Whereas**, following biblical principles of discipline, a Presbytery should have the right to
32 adjudicate a report of false teaching or heinous sin concerning a teaching elder within
33 its bounds before original jurisdiction is assumed by a higher court; and
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35 **Whereas**, it is still appropriate for a higher court to assume original jurisdiction if the
36 Presbytery fails to indict after receiving credible reports from multiple Presbyteries,
37 and it is reasonable to raise that number to three (3) Presbyteries to increase the number
38 of witnesses to such false teaching or heinous sin; and
39

40 **Whereas**, it is also right for the General Assembly, upon receiving such a request, to have the
41 option to refuse original jurisdiction but require the lower court to institute process by
42 indicting the teaching elder, and then to review their actions through the proper
43 channels;
44

1 **Therefore**, Westminster Presbytery overtures the 53rd General Assembly to amend *BCO* 34-
2 1 set forth below (underlining for additions; ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions):

3
4 **34-1.** Process against a minister shall be entered before the Presbytery of which
5 he is a member. However, if the Presbytery receives a report from another
6 Presbytery concerning the false teaching or heinous sin of a teaching elder under
7 its jurisdiction and fails to indict, the Presbytery that submitted the report may
8 request the General Assembly to assume original jurisdiction; that is, to initially
9 receive, hear, and determine the matter. The General Assembly may assume
10 original jurisdiction upon the request of three (3) Presbyteries concerning the
11 same matter. Alternatively, the General Assembly may require the original
12 Presbytery to indict the teaching elder and submit a record of the case to the
13 General Assembly for review. ~~refuses to act in doctrinal cases or cases of public~~
14 ~~scandal and two other Presbyteries request the General Assembly to assume~~
15 ~~original jurisdiction (to first receive and initially hear and determine), the General~~
16 ~~Assembly shall do so.~~

17
18 So that the amended *BCO* 34-1 would read:

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20 **34-1.** Process against a minister shall be entered before the Presbytery of which
21 he is a member. However, if the Presbytery receives a report from another
22 Presbytery concerning the false teaching or heinous sin of a teaching elder under
23 its jurisdiction and fails to indict, the Presbytery that submitted the report may
24 request the General Assembly to assume original jurisdiction; that is, to initially
25 receive, hear, and determine the matter. The General Assembly may assume
26 original jurisdiction upon the request of three (3) Presbyteries concerning the
27 same matter. Alternatively, the General Assembly may require the original
28 Presbytery to indict the teaching elder and submit a record of the case to the
29 General Assembly for review.

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32 *Adopted by the Westminster Presbytery at its stated meeting, November 8th, 2025.*

33 *Attested by /s/ TE Thomas E. Rickard, Stated Clerk*