



## ***“I’m Just an Overture”*** **or How does an Overture become a Resolution and get to the District and/or Synod Convention?**

*With apologies to “I’m Just a Bill” (from Schoolhouse Rock)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyeJ55o3E10>

*1) Overtures -- Who is allowed to submit overtures? If submitted by a congregation, does it have to have unanimous or majority congregational support? If submitted by a Circuit, is this with full approval of the pastors within the Circuit? Do the ones submitted by the Board of Directors offer a glimpse of the priorities of the District? Why are some overtures duplicates? For support in numbers or...?*

First of all, what *is* an overture? It is a recommendation in the form of a proposed resolution, or multiple resolutions, requesting action on the part of the convention. It may be submitted only by a member congregation of the Synod in the district, the district board of directors, an official district conference of ordained and/or commissioned ministers, a committee established by a prior convention of the Synod/district; the faculty of an educational institution of the Synod (i.e. from the universities or seminaries); Synod’s Board of Directors or a board or commission of the Synod, a committee established by a prior Synod or district convention, or a forum of a circuit.

The Synod’s and district’s bylaws do not specify whether an overture from a congregation would need to be adopted by a simple majority or unanimous approval of their governing body. That would depend on the congregation’s own constitution and bylaws. Typically, it would be a simple majority vote taken by the congregation’s governing body (i.e. voters’ assembly, church council, board of directors, etc.).

If an overture is submitted by a circuit forum (made up of a pastor and layperson, designated by their congregation to vote on their behalf, from each congregation in the circuit), there is also no requirement beyond a majority vote of those voting representatives present at the circuit forum.

Often, the overtures submitted by the district’s Board of Directors do offer an insight into the priorities of the board as they serve and provide leadership to the district. Some overtures may also be presented by the board as a matter of business that only the district convention has the authority to decide, but which the board has been preparing on behalf of the district during the triennium between conventions.

Some overtures are duplicates, or near-duplicates, as some are adopted by a congregation and are then often shared with other congregations, a circuit forum, and/or the board of directors or other eligible entity to seek additional support and influence when a floor committee considers the overtures assigned to them. If another group receives such an overture with encouragement from the originating group, they can choose to adopt it as is, modify it further before passing it on to the district convention, or opt to decline to offer it for proper reasons (i.e. already being handled or adequately addressed by Synod, not allowed by the Synod or district’s Constitution and/or Bylaws, etc.). Each overture stands by itself in importance, as it is coming from its originating agency or entity of the Synod. However, when it has multiple supporters, a floor committee recognizes the issue affects more than just one group as they consider the overtures for what actions may need to be recommended and presented to the convention to adopt or decline. Sometimes, there may be numerous overtures on differing sides of an issue, and the floor committee then must propose what they discern is most beneficial for the district to support or provide direction.

*2) Floor Committees -- How are Floor Committee assignments made? How are chairmen selected? Do they meet in advance of the Convention and whittle down the overtures? Is every overture considered in floor committee hearings? In the hearings, are submitters allowed to speak to their overture? Are topics debated in hearings? What is the outcome of floor committee hearings? Resolutions presented to the Convention delegates at large for approval?*

Floor committees are appointed by the district president, and he assigns the overtures to the committees, depending on the categories in which he groups them. Each floor committee is to have ordained, commissioned, and lay members who are voting delegates, advisory delegates, and advisory representatives. The elections floor committee is made up of: at least two ordained ministers; at least one commissioned minister; and at least two laypersons. The district president also appoints the chairman, and the chairman selects the committee's secretary.

The district president determines if the floor committees need to meet prior to the convention. This convention, the floor committees will meet two weeks prior to the convention to draft their proposed resolutions from the overtures, and these will be posted on the district website a week or more in advance of the convention.

Each floor committee considers every overture assigned to them, and determines if an overture should be presented to be adopted, declined for particular reasons, or referred to another responsible group in the district, or to send on as an overture to the next Synod convention (for a similar process). Some overtures are grouped together, and the floor committee determines what action they will recommend to the convention for consideration in a resolution. Every resolution references the overture(s) connected to it, and every overture would be covered by their resolutions proposed for adoption, declination, or referral.

The open hearings provide delegates, both voting and advisory, the opportunity to address the resolution that is being proposed by the floor committee, whether or not they or their congregation, circuit, etc. was the initial submitter. The delegate may simply want to provide the floor committee with their thoughts in support or opposition of the resolution, or how they feel it could be improved before presentation to the convention for action on the floor. The open hearings are not an opportunity to debate the resolution - that is to be saved for the convention floor. Generally, the committee is simply listening to the delegates, although questions for clarification can be asked of the committee, to which the chairman typically is the responder. The open hearings also provide an opportunity for delegates who do not care to speak to a proposed resolution, but simply want to hear more about the issue and any varying concerns as they prepare for the convention. Correspondence to the committee from delegates/congregations, etc. is also sometimes received via written communication prior to the open hearing, and the floor committee has the opportunity to meet and refine the resolutions that they will formally bring to the convention. These are not presented in the open hearing, however, as the hearing is for the delegates to speak to or listen to other delegates regarding what has been previously printed and distributed. After the open hearing, the floor committee has the opportunity to revise their resolutions based on new substantive information or viewpoints brought to them during the open hearing. They will then formally adopt and prioritize their resolutions for presentation to the convention for consideration and action.

The only floor committees that do not hold an open hearing are the nominations and election committees. The nominations committee's work involves receiving nominations and determining the slates of candidates to present they are to present to the convention, as well as

alternates should a candidate drop out of the election for any reason. The elections committee is tasked with the actual election processes during the convention.

Once a floor committee brings a resolution to the floor of the convention for consideration, delegates are able to speak for or against the resolution, offer an amendment to a portion of the resolution, or offer a substitute resolution for the convention to consider. If the convention or floor committee determines that the resolution needs additional work in order to keep it from being declined, it may be tabled and worked on by the committee before being represented to the convention as a new version of the resolution (i.e. 01-01-18A, B, etc.) Once all the discussion, debate, and amending are complete, the final vote takes place to adopt or decline the resolution.

*3) Results -- Are overtures which are adopted then forwarded on to the Synod for consideration and/or inclusion in a similar process before the next Synod Convention? If one's overture is declined or runs out of time to come to the convention floor, can the overture be presented again at the next Convention?*

The minutes of the convention and the results of the convention's decisions (adoption or declination of the resolutions) are published and distributed to the delegates, congregations, district officers, ministry teams, task forces, committees, and other entities of the district. Resolutions adopted by the convention delegates regarding actions to be carried out in and through the district are then taken up by the district board of directors, officers, or other appropriate group directed to implement the resolution. Resolutions which encourage congregations to consider the convention's action are to be reported on by the convention delegates to their congregations and considered for application in their own congregation's mission and ministry context. Resolutions which memorialize the next Synod convention for action are forwarded by the district's officers to the Secretary of the Synod for consideration in a similar process at the Synod level, combined with other congregations' and districts' reports and memorials.

If a resolution is declined, it may be reintroduced at the next convention by means of an overture. It would be recommended to consider why it was declined, and possibly modify the overture or provide further rationale before resubmitting it as an overture to the next convention. If the resolution was intended to be sent to the next Synod convention as a memorial, it can be adopted by a congregation, or other entity able to submit an overture, and submit it directly to the next Synod convention. If the resolution was not able to be acted upon, or have action completed, by the convention prior to the convention's adjournment, the resolution itself dies at the close of the convention, but can be submitted to the next district or Synod convention for consideration.

For a flow chart of the process, please see the following page.

[**References:** LCMS Constitution Articles VIII; IX; XII; LCMS Bylaws 3.1.6.2; 3.1.7 - 3.1.8.1 (b); 4.1.3; 4.2.1 - 4.2.4; 4.4.1 (a); 4.5.1 (d); 4.7.1 - 4.7.3; 4.8.1 - 4.8.3; 5.3.1 - 5.3.5; MDS Bylaws 2.1.1; 2.2.1 - 2.2.7; 6.1.1.1 - 6.1.1.2; 8.1.1 - 8.4.5; Convention Special Standing Rules, which will be in the Convention Workbook]

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