



## Who's Voting on Amendment B?

February 19, 2009

**Dear Friend,**

Strength and truth of argument *should* be what determines the outcome of the vote on matters like Amendment B. But often the outcome depends more on *integrity of the process* than on *argument*.

Sometimes it's simply a matter of not knowing.

### **Who is eligible to vote?**

Eligibility to vote on amendments to the constitution is determined by the Book of Order and your presbytery's policy. The Book of Order requires an equal number of clergy and elder commissioners eligible to vote at meetings of presbytery. Often, because of the large number of retired and specialized clergy members of presbytery, some churches are granted additional elder commissioners in order to balance the numbers.

Elder commissioners do not have to be currently serving on Session.

Be sure you know the number of commissioners your church is eligible to send to vote on Amendment B. Be sure that commissioners are elected and ready to attend the meeting, to speak and to vote against the amendment. There are [resources](#) on our website to help you prepare to speak in support of the current requirement of fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness, and against Amendment B, which would remove that requirement.

Presbyteries have policies beyond the requirement of the Book of Order for clergy/elder balance. You should know what that policy is. If you don't know, ask your presbytery executive or moderator.

Make an effort to ensure that those eligible to vote at the meeting are clearly identified and know who they are. No visitor to the meeting, whether clergy or elder, is eligible to vote. Clergy must be members of the presbytery and elders must be commissioned by their sessions, unless your presbytery has a policy that states otherwise.

### **Examples of differentiating**

One presbytery recently took a standing vote on all the amendments but Amendment B. At the same meeting, they used a paper ballot for Amendment B. The vote count for the paper ballot was larger than for the standing votes. That difference suggested a problem in the voting process that needed to be challenged. No one should be accused of wrong-doing, but it would be perfectly in order in a case like this to call for a repeat vote, a standing vote on Amendment B

Another presbytery has decided to issue nametags that clearly identify those eligible to vote in order to separate them from those attending the meeting who are not eligible to vote.

In some presbyteries, those not eligible to vote are asked to move to another location in the meeting room, so that there is physical separation between those eligible to vote from those who are there as observers.

In cases where both commissioners and visitors are invited to join in small table discussions, the body should conclude that discussion and move into debate and vote, making it clear that only commissioners are eligible at that point to speak and to vote.

If you are not clear about who may vote in your presbytery meeting on Amendment B, please go to a microphone and ask the Moderator to clarify. You will help the whole body by asking for clarification. If you can help establish a clear process ahead of the meeting, that will be even better.

**Get out the vote!**

We are grateful for every Presbyterian who has taken a stand to support the biblical standards in G-6.0106b. If you check the [unofficial tally of votes](#) on our website, you will see that the majority of presbyteries continue to affirm the current standards as faithful to Scripture.

But so far the turnout for the vote is diminished this time around. The majority of presbytery voting is still ahead of us. Please do not yield to discouragement or cynicism. Take a stand and make a clear witness in your presbytery. Persevere. Help others in your presbytery with transportation to the meeting. Be sure that your church has a full contingent of voting commissioners when the vote on Amendment B is taken.

If you need help with process or resources, please contact me. We in the Coalition want to help.

And please keep your own presbytery as well as other presbyteries in your prayers.

God bless your efforts to see the PCUSA remain faithful in its standards for ordination.

Yours in Christ,

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