



News and Action

from The Presbyterian Coalition

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Seeing Through the New FOG

A replacement Form of Government will come to the General Assembly in July. Two years ago, a moderator-appointed task force submitted a proposed rewrite to the 2008 GA. Many presbyteries sent up overtures at that time in response to that proposal. Not a single overture supported that new Form of Government (nFOG), and everyone who testified before the GA committee recommended against adoption. The General Assembly committee itself showed little knowledge of the document and scant enthusiasm for it.



In the end, the General Assembly sent the proposed nFOG back to the task force for another try. They will bring their revised replacement document to the GA in 2010. It is little changed from the document presented in 2008.

There remain manifold problems with this year's version of the nFOG: the degrading of Scripture, a radical, undefined inclusiveness without boundaries, loss of due-process protections for pastors and congregations, the disappearance of voluntary per capita, and a governance-by-manual that leaves vital details unspecified and eliminates rights now protected by the Constitution. It is a plan for a more hierarchical governance that moves the locus of power away from congregations and toward the higher governing bodies.

In this information-packed e-newsletter, you will find both summaries of the problems and longer articles that spell out the implications of the proposed changes, with citations from the document itself. We include a sample overture that your church can use to get directly involved by sending it to the General Assembly.

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More Harm Than Help

This two-page summary lists five significant problems with the proposed Form of Government. [Read more . . .](#)

How the nFOG Would Harm Churches: A Summary

This two-page summary of a longer resource with the same title provides a quick look at how your congregation would be negatively affected by the nFOG, were it to pass. [Read more . . .](#)

Thinking Twice

This is one of the most comprehensive critiques you can find. It takes a systematic and thorough look at the proposal. [Read more . . .](#)

How the Proposed nFOG Would Harm Churches

This carefully footnoted article, with multiple comparisons between the current and proposed documents, has nineteen subsections, each identifying a separate effect of the proposed document. In each case, the negative effect noted is not present in the current Form of Government. Author Carol Shanholtzer writes:

"As long as the congregation is free to continue its life and ministries, the average Presbyterian has little interest in what happens at the denominational level. However, the proposed new Form of Government (nFOG) would bring about significant negative changes at the congregational level. That is because though purporting to create a denomination more "focus[ed] on the mission of God," the nFOG in fact would create a more centralized, hierarchical governance in our denomination." [Read more . . .](#)

Send an Overture

We urge you to take action in your session and presbytery. The linked overture provides a way to continue to seek a more missional, more effective Form of Government. [The overture](#) offers an alternative to bringing wholesale and unhelpful change through the nFOG.

May 19 is [the deadline](#) for this overture, or others like it -- including concurrences with overtures already submitted. While that may seem far off, it is not. The process can take several months, because an overture adopted by a session needs to be approved by a presbytery in order to become business at the General Assembly. It is important to begin now.

If you need help with the overture process, please [contact me](#).



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