How the Legislative Process Works in the House of Deputies and the Governance and Legislative System

Whether you are a seasoned House of Deputies veteran or a first-time Deputy, we all started our General Convention journey at the beginning. Many of us arrived on the Floor the first time knowing next to nothing about parliamentary procedure, Rules of Order, or the Constitution and Canons. Because General Convention was established by some of the same people who crafted the government of the United States, those of us from the United States with a high school civics class come in with a bit of privilege that some of our colleagues do not possess. If you hail from a diocese outside of the United States, the governance in your community may look the same or very different than it does in the U.S. and, by extension, at General Convention. What follows is an attempt to describe the process by which an idea can become an Act of General Convention.

Resolution – a Resolution calls for action, communication, or implementation by the Church, its constituent members, one of its governing bodies, or an outside entity. Resolutions are always action statements: "The 82nd General Convention resolves (decides) that something should happen..."

The vast majority of proposals to General Convention are Resolutions, so we will focus on those here. Memorials do not require specific action but rather seek to draw attention to an issue. For more information on Memorials, see the General Convention website.

The Road to an Act of General Convention

1. Idea Phase
    - Every Resolution begins as an idea. Would you like to see someone added to the Calendar of the Church? Do you think the Church needs to speak to a current event? Is there something that requires further study? Writing a Resolution can make that idea a reality as it invites the General Convention to discern together the mission, ministry, and voice of our Church.
2. Research Phase

    Our 2027 meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, will be the 82nd General Convention of The Episcopal Church. As Deputies, we inherit a lot of history. Once the General Convention has acted on a Resolution, it cannot act on it again, unless the Church is changing its mind, so it is always best to check on that history before you begin. (HoD Rule VII.C.vii.b)

- The Governance and Legislative System (GLS) will ask you a series of questions about your research.
    - Has the General Convention, Executive Council, or another Interim Body previously acted or issued a statement, resolution, or report on the subject matter of your submission?
    - Does the subject matter of your submission duplicate or overlap with existing work or submitted resolution of other Deputies, Bishops, or Interim Bodies?
    - Have you consulted with The Archives of The Episcopal Church for previous resolutions, statements, or reports on the subject matter of your submission?
    - What consultation has already occurred on the subject matter of your submission?
- The Archives is a great resource to answer many of these questions, and staff members are always eager to help. You can find them online at https://episcopalarchives.org/.
- Resolutions that include The Episcopal Church taking a stand on an issue of public policy or impact the ministry of staff members in Mission Program or Congregational Vitality require an additional step. We ask that you consult with the departments in question as you develop your Resolution.
    - For policy Resolutions dealing with the Office of Government Relations, Migration Ministries, Anglican Communion, Global Partnerships, Socially Responsible Investing, Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, and the United Nations, contact Public Policy, Partnership, and Witness via email at eppn@episcopalchurch.org.
    - For non-policy Resolutions related to The Episcopal Church's work around racial justice, gender justice, creation care, ethnic ministries, and other issues of social justice, write to Mission Program at mission@episcopalchurch.org.
- For Resolutions dealing with church planting, revitalization, and redevelopment, email Congregational Vitality at vitality@episcopalchurch.org. Resolutions that propose to amend the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church will be examined by a Review Committee to ensure they are in proper form, are consistent with the Constitution and Canons, and include all necessary amendments to effect the change (HoD Rule VII.F). The House of Deputies Resolution Review Committee will be happy to help you with this process.
- If your Resolution implements a Task Force and/or has budget implications, the GLS will require you to report on the makeup of the Task Force and a proposed budget in the Resolution submission module.

3. Draft Phase
    - The Governance and Legislative System (GLS) allows anyone who is authorized to propose a Resolution the ability to do so. Resolutions can be proposed by:
        - A Deputy if (HoD Rule VII.D):
            - Two other Deputies endorse it; and
            - The Deputy proposes no more than three Resolutions
        - A Bishop if (HoB Rule V.C):

        - Two other Bishops, all from different dioceses, endorse it; and
        - The Bishop proposes no more than three Resolutions
    - The Presiding Bishop
    - The President of the House of Deputies
    - A Legislative Committee
    - A House Message
    - A Diocese
    - A Province
    - A Standing Commission, Task Force, or other Interim Body required to report to the General Convention
    - The Executive Council
- Resolutions must be submitted no later than 60 days prior to the first legislative day (July 3, 2027) unless (HoD Rule VII.E):
    - Fifteen deputies submit a petition to the Secretary before the first legislative day to consider it as a Post-Deadline Resolution
    - A Legislative Committee votes to submit it by a two-thirds (66% + 1) vote
    - A Diocese or Province submits it before the first legislative day
    - The House votes by a simple majority (50% + 1) to consider it
    - The President of the House of Deputies proposes it
    - It is a Resolution of privilege or courtesy
    - It is a message from the House of Bishops
    - It is a special order of business
- Resolutions may have multiple resolve clauses; however, they should all pertain to only one issue. The General Convention cannot affirm puppies and Just War principles in the same Resolution.
- If, at any point in the drafting phase, you need assistance, Resolution Review is ready to help. Simply click "I'd like help with my draft" at any time.

4. Review Phase
    - Once you are happy with the content of your Resolution, you may submit it for review by the House of Deputies Resolution Review Committee. At this point, your Resolution is Pending Submission and will be visible to all credentialed users of the GLS.
    - After review by the Resolution Review Committee, edits to your Resolution are possible.
    - Members of the Committee will look over your Resolution and offer feedback. This iterative process is meant to help you write the best Resolution possible so that it can flow smoothly through General Convention.
5. Submitted Phase
    - When you are content with the final product, Resolution Review will pass your now Submitted Resolution to the President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop for action.
    - No further edits may be made.
    - Resolutions must be filed no later than 60 days before the first legislative day.
    - The Presiding Officers will assign the Resolution a House of Initial Action and hand it to the appropriate Legislative Committees in their respective Houses (Joint Rule II.3.a).

- At this point the Resolution is assigned a number. The numbering system has changed for the 82nd General Convention. Instead of the old A, B, C, D alphabet codes based on the Proposer of the Resolution, Resolutions will now be categorized based on their proposed action:
    - **CC** (Constitution and Canons) – Changes to the Constitution, Canons, or Rules of Order
    - **LM** (Liturgy and Music) – Changes to the Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal, the Calendar, trial liturgies, etc.
    - **DI** (Churchwide Directives and Interim Work) – Directs inter-convention work by Interim Bodies, Executive Council, DFMS (Domestic and Foreign Missionary Service) staff, Provinces, or Dioceses
    - **CD** (Common Discernment) – Our shared witness on matters of ethics, morality, justice, and public policy
- From here, the Resolution is the property of the General Convention and can no longer be edited by the Proposer.
- Your Resolution is now Filed and becomes visible to the public through the GLS Tracker.

6. Filed - Legislative Committee Phase
    - The House of Bishops and House of Deputies each have their own Legislative Committees assigned by their own Presiding Officers. Parallel Committees of the same number and name typically meet and hold hearings together but are required to vote separately.
    - Once a Resolution is given to a Legislative Committee, the Committee is required to hold a hearing to receive feedback (HoD Rule VIII.B.1). These hearings will take place as early as 90 days before the opening of Convention via Zoom (HoD Rule VIII.B.1.iii). Those wishing to testify at a hearing may register via the GLS.
    - Legislative committees can also receive written testimony. The GLS will allow for written testimony to be submitted after a hearing has been scheduled by a Legislative Committee (HoD Rule VIII.B.5).
    - The Legislative Committee must act on a Resolution no later than seven days before the first legislative day and may recommend (HoD Rules VIII.C.1 and VIII.C.3):
        - Adopt
        - Adopt with amendment
        - Adopt a substitute Resolution
        - Adopt a consolidated substitute Resolution
        - Reject
        - Refer to a specified body
        - Take no further action
    - If the matter has already been acted upon by the House of Initial Action, the Committee may recommend:
        - Concur
        - Concur as amended
        - Concur with substitute
        - Not concur and take a different action
        - Not concur

7. Dispatch Phase
    - Once the Legislative Committee has voted, the Resolution is placed automatically on the Consent Calendar (HoD Rule VI.C.3). The Consent Calendar is voted on as a block, with every recommendation from the Legislative Committee being adopted by a "yes" vote on the Consent Calendar (HoD Rule VI.C.6). Items may not be placed on the Consent Calendar automatically if (HoD Rule VI.C.3):
        - The Legislative Committee votes to exclude it from the Consent Calendar
        - It is removed by:
            - The Chair of the Committee on the Dispatch of Business
            - The Proposer
            - Any three Deputies
            - The President of the House
        - The Rules of Order, the Joint Rules of Order, the Canons, or the Constitution require a different voting procedure
        - The item has been set by a Special Order of Business
        - It is an election
        - It is a Resolution of privilege or courtesy
        - It is the confirmation of the election of the Presiding Bishop
    - The Consent Calendar is published at least 24 hours before the beginning of the session in which it will be voted upon (HoD Rule VI.C.2.i).
8. Floor Action Phase
    - Items placed on the Legislative Calendar can be debated in the House. Debate is limited to 30 minutes per Resolution, and for the first six minutes of debate time, no amendments are allowed. After six minutes, each prefiled amendment will be considered in turn, as time allows. Each amendment will be debated for a maximum of six minutes (HoD Rule XII.D.1-2).
    - Members of the House may queue to participate in the debate (HoD Rule XII.D.3).
        - Each speech may last no longer than two minutes. For speeches that require interpretation into English, two extra minutes will be given (HoD Rule XII.D.4).
        - The speech may be for or against the matter before the House.
        - It may ask a question of the committee.
        - Members may speak only twice on any one matter.
    - Debate ends when (HoD Rule XII.D.5):
        - Time expires
        - A motion to end debate and vote immediately is passed by a two-thirds majority
        - The Presiding Officer rules that there is no further debate
    - When a matter is put to vote by the Presiding Officer, most often a voice vote will be taken. When the voice vote is unclear, an electronic vote will follow.
    - A vote by orders may be asked for by the lay or clerical deputations from at least three different dioceses or as required by the Constitution or Canons (HoD Rule XIV.E.1.i). A vote by orders means that the Lay and Clergy Deputies vote separately, and each diocese has one vote for each order.
        - A yes vote requires 50%+1 of Deputies in their order to vote yes.
        - A no vote occurs when 50% or more of Deputies in their order vote no.

- When the House votes to Adopt a Resolution, it is then sent to the House of Bishops for Concurrence.
- When the House of Bishops is the House of Initial Action, the Resolution is sent to the House of Deputies for Concurrence.
- Only a Resolution Adopted and Concurred in both houses becomes an Act of Convention.