

**Council of Delegates Comments regarding Overture 1****MEMO****To:** Synod 2024**From:** CRCNA Council of Delegates**Re:** Overture 1: Amend the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook to Clarify Their Role in the Nomination Process (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 413-18)**Date:** March 2024

Classis Quinte has submitted an overture that requests the Council of Delegates (COD) to do a number of things, including adding footnotes to its Governance Handbook in relation to the approval of potential delegates received from the classes and apologizing to Classis Quinte for its interpretation of its handbook and how it conducted itself when it did not acquiesce to their recommended delegate to the COD.

The question really centers on determining what role the COD itself can and should play in the appointment of delegates. It is Classis Quinte's interpretation that the role of the COD is merely administrative. That is, the COD cannot work with a classis when the COD has concerns about a nominee it has received; rather, it must accept the individual the classis submits, even if it has reservations, or (as was the case which led to this overture) if the classis presents an individual who does not meet the criteria for service on the COD as defined in the handbook.

This overture seems to set-up a false dichotomy between what the overture calls "gate-keeping authority" versus "administrative function." It is not the intention nor the desire of the COD to become a "self-selecting ecosystem." In no case can the COD tell a classis whom they must nominate. Nor does the COD attempt to influence the nomination process within a classis. In fact, classes are given wide latitude in how and whom their delegate nominees will be. In that sense, the COD's role is strictly advisory and administrative. The COD does, however, need to have at least some input into the process in order to ensure the integrity and functionality of the body as a whole.

We exercise this input through the Governance Committee, which is responsible for working with classes to seek out individuals for nomination and to review and recommend those names submitted by the classes to the full COD for their approval at synod. If the Governance Committee has concerns or determines that an individual does not meet the requirements for COD service, it has the responsibility to make the classis and the COD aware of those issues so that trust and integrity are upheld.

The requirements for COD service that the Governance Committee considers are limited to the qualifications and fiduciary responsibilities as spelled out in the Member Job Description in the COD Handbook, particularly the ability to sign the Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA, the Code of Conduct, and the Conflict of Interest Policy. To approve an interim COD member midyear, or to recommend a new COD member to synod who does not agree with our beliefs or our code of conduct or who has a conflict of interest would seem to put the COD in conflict with the clearly expressed desires of synod.

We also think synod will want to consider the implications that Classis Quinte's overture would have on interim appointments to synod and the COD's right to address any future violators of the standards synod has set for COD membership. An interim member serves on the COD for up to three meetings until synod can approve them as a regular member. If the COD fills merely an administrative role, then the classis essentially becomes the sole appointee of any interim members filling a vacancy that may come up after June each year. If the COD has no right to require an interim COD nominee to sign the Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA, the Code of Conduct adopted by the COD and Synod 2023, or the Conflict of Interest policy, there would be the potential for someone to serve on the COD who conflicts with one or more of these. Likewise, any current COD member found to be clearly violating the Statement of Agreement or the Code of Conduct or having a conflict of interest would presumably remain on the COD until synod could take action.

While the COD advocates for having a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives represented in its membership, it would seem that having members who disagree with CRC beliefs, refuse to conduct themselves appropriately, or are found to be utilizing their position to pursue their own interests would not be beneficial to the welfare of our denomination.

Therefore, it is the belief of the Council of Delegates that this overture is an overcorrection in response to a very unique and specific set of circumstances (in this case, a conflict of interest) that perpetuated our request that Classis Quinte bring forward a different nominee. Since the presenting issue has been redacted from the documentation as submitted by the classis, the COD is limited to what it can respond to. This is, of course, in the best interests of the individual involved.

This circumstance has caused us to take a more careful look at the way in which the classes of the CRCNA and the COD work together to ensure that the classes and potential nominees are made aware of the fiduciary responsibilities of all COD members as outlined in the "Member Job Description" section of the COD Governance Handbook. To that end, the Governance Committee of the COD is currently drafting language to help clarify governance expectations for classes and nominees and to clarify its internal

process when potential issues are identified. In that way, we do indeed hope to clarify the role that the COD plays in receiving nominations from classes so as to avoid (as much as possible) future confusion or frustration for individuals, classes, the Council of Delegates, and synod.

*Note:* This communication is submitted to synod per the synodically approved “Right of Comment” policy in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, which states the following:

1. The COD itself (i.e., without staff initiation) may judge that synod would be well served by a formal communication in response to a matter on synod’s agenda that affects a ministry that falls under the governance of the COD.
2. If time permits, the COD may ask staff for background information.
3. The communication that emerges may be adopted or endorsed and communicated to synod via the COD’s Supplement Report.