

**OVT-005**      **On Setting Aside “Forming Social Policy” at the Next Three General Assemblies—From the Presbytery of the Foothills.**

**Source:**      Presbytery      **Event:**      222nd General Assembly (2016)

**Committee:** No Assignment      **Sponsor:**      Foothills Presbytery

**Topic:**      Unassigned      **Type:**      General Assembly Full Consideration

<http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=5291>

#### Recommendation

The Presbytery of the Foothills overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to temporarily set aside its Guideline and Policy for “Forming Social Policy” found in the appendix to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly. This section pertains to the role of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. The Presbytery of the Foothills recommends the following to temporarily take its place:

*For the next three General Assemblies (223rd, 224th, and 225th), the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) shall focus its attention on generating discussion in the presbyteries about any social witness policy concerns that arise. The aim of these discussions will be to work toward forming consensus in the broader church regarding social witness.*

*For this time period, the ACSWP shall not on its own propose any social witness policy to the General Assembly, synods, or presbyteries, but shall allow any social witness policy proposals to arise from the presbyteries in the form of overtures.*

*For this time period, the ACSWP shall not serve its usual role as a clearing house or editor for all social witness policy proposals written by any other entity.*

#### Rationale

The Social Witness Policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been decided at General Assembly by up or down votes, sometimes by narrow margins, without first generating a sense of the will of Christ from the broader church. This form of decision making has often led to deep divisions in the church. By spending time and effort at generating conversation and moving toward consensus, social witness policy can be formed that better reflects the wisdom and discernment of the whole church.

As much as possible, these conversations with presbyteries should be held through electronic means or regional meetings to minimize the expense. Any funds that would have been spent to bring ACSWP to its own committee meetings should be redirected toward the presbytery conversations.

In doing this, the ACSWP will be fulfilling the task force policy in section 3.c. of “Forming Social Policy” to develop a plan in which the whole church can participate in the formation of social witness policy.