

ITEM D.104
FOR ACTION

<i>FOR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY</i>			
	A. Finance		E. Corporate Property, Legal, Finance
	B. Justice		F. PC(USA), A Corporation
	C. Leadership		G. Audit
X	D. Worshipping Communities		H. Executive Committee
			J. Board Nominating & Governance Subcommittee
			P. Plenary

Subject: **Comment to the 221st GA (2014) – Overture 11 “On Amending W-4.9000 Concerning the Church’s Role in Legal Marriage and Services of Christian Covenant”**

Recommendation:

That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approve the following comment on Overture 11, “On Amending W-4.9000 Concerning the Church’s Role in Legal Marriage and Services of Christian Covenant–From the Presbytery of Lehigh” to the 221st GA (2014).

Comment:

Overture 11 from Lehigh Presbytery seeks to amend W-4.9000 in the *Book of Order* on the understanding of marriage. There are many aspects to this amendment, but one concerns the relationship of civil and church roles in services of Christian marriage.

The earliest Reformed patterns for marriage in the American colonies included separate civil and Christian recognition. The couple would be legally married by a civil authority, and then would receive Christian solemnization subsequently. This separation of the civil and religious aspects of marriage is practiced by many Reformed churches, and in many countries around the world.

In American history this pattern changed before the American Revolution largely as the result of Anglican influence where the King was head of the church and the state. In this understanding the minister was understood as a representative of the church and an agent of the state who therefore could perform the legal and religious functions simultaneously. This later pattern has endured and is reflected in W-4.9000 on marriage.