

A Resolution Concerning Consents to Episcopal Elections

Proposer: Committee for Gay and Lesbian Ministry

Resolved, that this 76th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester submits the following resolution to the 76th General Convention...

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, that this 76th General Convention affirms that standing committees and bishops with jurisdiction are not bound by any extra-canonical restraints—including but not limited to the restraints set forth in Resolution B033 passed by the 75th General Convention—when considering consents to the ordination of any candidate to the episcopate.

EXPLANATION

As a result of the Windsor Report, the 75th General Convention was under extraordinary pressure to enact a moratorium on the election, consent, and consecration of further gay or lesbian bishops. The House of Deputies rejected such a resolution (A161) on June 20, 2006. However, the very next day, the former Presiding Bishop used highly unusual parliamentary tactics to force a vote on Resolution B033—which called upon "Standing Committees and bishops with jurisdiction to exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion." To everyone present, it was clear that "manner of life" was code for "gay and lesbian persons with same-sex domestic partners." The new Presiding Bishop expressed her reluctant support for the resolution, as did a few gay and lesbian deputies. The resolution was passed by both houses with great emotion.

In the days following General Convention, chancellors began pointing out that B033 is a violation of the ecclesiastical laws that govern the Episcopal Church. The Canons of General Convention (Title III, Canon 1, Section 2) prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation: "No person shall be denied access to the discernment process for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons." The canons do not prohibit gay and lesbian persons who are in same-sex, domestic partnerships from being elected, consented, and consecrated to the episcopate.

Every decision involves "cost" and "promise." The passage of this resolution has achieved its intended cost—to date no additional gay or lesbian persons have been elected to the episcopate. Indeed, many qualified gay and lesbian persons are declining to run in episcopal elections for fear that, if elected, they would not receive sufficient consents. In contrast, this resolution has not achieved its intended promise—the Anglican Communion continues its slow slide toward schism.

It is past time to reverse the unjust and discriminatory effect of B033 by enacting this resolution.