

C-5 Amend Canon 2 to add Section 7

RESOLVED, that the Canons of the Diocese of Virginia be amended as set forth below.

Canon 2 (“Lay Representation in Convention”) of the Canons of the Diocese of Virginia be amended to include provision for election of youth delegates to the Annual Convention, as follows (new language shown in *red, italics and underlined*):

Amendment to Canons

Canon 2 – Lay Representation in Convention

Section 1. The Churches of this Diocese entitled to Lay representation in the Convention are those which were recorded by the Secretary of the Convention as Parish Churches or Separate Congregations on the effective date of this Canon, together with Churches thereafter constituted in accordance with Canon and received into union by act of the Convention.

Section 2. The Missions of this Diocese entitled to Lay representation in the Convention are those which were recorded by the Secretary of the Convention as such on the effective date of this Canon, together with those Missions thereafter constituted in accordance with Canon and reported as such to the Secretary of the Convention.

Section 3. A list of the Churches and Missions entitled to representation in the Convention shall be appended to the Journal of each meeting of the Convention.

Section 4. No later than April 1, the Vestry of a Church or the Vestry Committee of a Mission shall elect the Lay Delegates from that Church or Mission to the Convention and one Lay Alternate for each Lay Delegate elected. For Churches entitled to multiple Lay Delegates, the Vestry may designate the order in which the Lay Alternates are to serve in the event Lay Delegates are absent. In the event a Lay Delegate is absent and no Lay Alternate is available, the Vestry or, if the Vestry is unavailable the Rector or Vicar in consultation with the Wardens, shall appoint a person qualified to serve as a Lay Delegate and so advise the Committee on Credentials.

Section 5. The election of adult confirmed communicants in good standing as Lay Delegates and Lay Alternates to the Convention shall be certified by the Rector, Vicar, Register, Priest-in-Charge, or one of the Wardens of the Church or Mission, in duplicate, which certificate shall be in a form to be supplied by the Secretary of the Diocese. One copy of this certificate shall be sent to the Secretary of the Diocese no later than April 15, and a copy shall be given to each Delegate and each Alternate named therein.

Section 6. Lay Delegates of Churches, or in their absence, their Alternates, shall be entitled to one vote each on all questions coming before the Convention. Alternates shall not be entitled to voice and vote in the meetings of the Convention except when serving in the absence of a Lay Delegate.

Section 7. Youth Delegates.

Each Region of the Diocese may elect one Youth Delegate and one Alternate Youth Delegate to the Annual Convention. Youth Delegates shall be communicants in good standing, between the ages of sixteen (16) and twenty-one (21), and shall have seat, voice, and vote in the Convention. The election of Youth Delegates shall take place at a duly called meeting of the Regional Council on or before May 1 each year. Certification of election shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Convention in accordance with established procedures. Provided, however, that any Regional Council may elect any otherwise-eligible youth communicant in good standing of a congregation in this Diocese without regard to the youth's home congregation or region.

~~Section 7.~~ **Section 8.** Secretary of the Diocese shall make a roll of the Lay Delegates and Alternates certified to the Secretary as duly elected with their respective Churches and Missions. The President of the Convention shall appoint a Committee on Credentials, to be composed of one Clerical member and two Lay Delegates, to which shall be referred the credentials of all Lay Delegates. The Committee shall make its report to the Convention promptly. Until this report is received, the roll as made by the Secretary shall, unless objection is made, be accepted as the authentic roll of Lay Delegates and Alternates.

Should doubt arise as to the right of any Lay Delegate or Alternate to a seat, the Committee on Credentials shall hear the evidence presented and report its judgment. Upon this report the Convention shall determine the matter unless by a vote of two-thirds of the members present the Convention decides to hear the whole case de novo.

Financial Impact: No impact on the Diocesan Budget.

Background: Youth delegates were first approved at the 197th Annual Council (1992) to bring younger voices into the governance of the Diocese; in the proceeding 198th Council (1993) the number of youth delegates was raised from four to five and responsibility shifted from election by the Executive Board to Region Councils electing them on a rotating basis as established by Standing Committee. The first five youth delegates served at the 199th Convention in 1994. In 2012, the Constitution was changed to permit a youth delegate elected by each Regional Council. Youth participation increased in the first five conventions after 2015, but participation has declined since then, with only one year (2019) having more than 50% youth participation. Only 60% of the available seats have been filled over that period, and since 2018, participation has fallen to 19%.

Under Article III, Section 1(e) of the Constitution of the Diocese of Virginia, each of the sixteen Regions may elect one youth delegate. While no constitutional language limits elections to youth residing within a Region, that has become the practice. This leaves seats vacant when no eligible youth are available locally; at the same time, some Regions have more youth ready and able to serve than the current structure allows.

This canonical amendment preserves the total of sixteen youth delegates but clarifies that a Region may elect any eligible youth communicant from across the Diocese. This ensures all sixteen seats can be filled, strengthens youth representation, and maintains regional responsibility for election.

This amendment to Canon 2 (“Lay Representation in Convention”) does not conflict with Article III, Section 1(e) of the Constitution or with the Canons of the Episcopal Church or the Diocese of Virginia. We believe the canonical amendment is appropriate and consistent with the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Virginia.

<i>Council/Convention</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Possible</i>	<i>Present</i>
217th Council	2012	5	5
218th Council	2013	5	5
219th Council	2014	15	13
220th Council	2015	15	15
221st Council	2016	15	9
222nd Convention	2017	15	12
223rd Convention	2017	15	15
224th Convention	2018	16	7
225th Convention	2019	16	9
226th Convention	2020	16	6
227th Convention	2021	16	6
228th Convention	2022	16	4
229th Convention	2023	16	3
		181	109
2012-2023 Participation Rate			60%
2018-2023 Participation Rate			36%
2022-2023 Participation Rate			22%

Submitted by:

The Very Rev. Kathleen Murray, Historic Beckford Parish
The Rev. Laura Minnich Lockey, Canterbury – Harrisonburg; St. Stephen and the Good, Shepherd
The Rev. Cathy Tibbetts, Retired
The Rev. Dr. Marian K. Windel, Retired
The Rev. Dr. Peter Frazer-Morris, Rector, Christ Church, Luray
The Rev. David Rose, Rector, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Harrisonburg
The Rev. Dr. Cynthia K. Walter, Grace Memorial, Port Republic
Marcia T. Brownfield, Region President, Southern Shenandoah Region
David Penrod, Delegate, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Harrisonburg