

A Summary of Suggestions

1. That there be no more decision making boards in the Synod, but that all boards become merely advisory, leaving decision-making power in the sole hands of the President of Synod and the remaining executives, whom he will have tremendous influence over. This Presidential Office will effectively “rule” for a term of six years.
2. That delegate representation be slashed significantly to less than 700 delegates to represent more than 6,000 congregations and pastors, and 15 million congregation members. These 700 delegate represent the *only voice* congregations will have in how things are accomplished in the Synod.
3. That congregations earn two more delegates for every extra 750 members, creating a “House of Representatives” where formerly we were a “Senate.”
4. That overtures to Synod be greatly limited in power to be heard, unless they are already the position of the majority.
5. That doctrinal resolutions which *change official doctrine* require a 2/3 vote.
6. That any bylaws that are adopted become *binding forces* upon all congregations and pastors. This can happen by a mere 50% majority vote.

Some Observations

1. The second paragraph says, "The following proposals are not final by any means. The task force considers its work to be under construction." In other words, the final proposals may get much better, or much, much worse.
2. With only a hat-tip to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the report plunges in to governance issues. In other words, we are in the realm of politics now, not theology. There are worldly presuppositions and agendas at work in the proposals.
3. The proposal that "circuits could be formed geographically, **by affinity group** [emphasis mine], by size of congregation, or by any other method deemed most appropriate by the congregations of the district" will ensure that we would have entire circuits of consumerist pop-Christianity, Contemporary Worship, Saddleback-Willow Creek congregations, who would get more delegates (because of their size).
4. Several items under "Congregations and the National Synod" entail eliminating various boards and committees (in general, good), with fewer "national," non-executive staff reporting directly to the president. But having no more decision-making boards, treating them all as “advisory,” with all executives reporting directly to the President of the Synod, more or less concentrates *total power* in the hands of the Synodical president, who, coincidentally, would now be elected for six years, rather than three.
5. Because there will be fewer standing boards (again, a good thing in general,) certain needs will be met by “task forces” such as for the “LCMS Youth Gather, hymnal projects, transformation of congregations, urban ministry, and the like.” On the surface this is innocuous, but, because the President will be the one with sole power to appoint and empower these working groups, he (whoever he is) will wield near total control of all synodical axillary activities.

6. The proposal that congregational delegates (one ordained/commissioned, one lay) per 750 members is somewhat expected. The system we have now is akin to a Senate--each congregation represented equally at District Conventions. This proposal would ensure that large congregations would have the most influence and control over District Conventions, which furthermore ensures that they will set the agenda, nominations and elections for all National-level Conventions.

7. Reducing the number of voting delegates to 625 or 850 at National Conventions, to "provide more effective representation" is an interesting notion primarily because it makes very little sense. It certainly would save money, but how can less representation ensure better representation?

8. National Convention delegates would be elected not at circuit forums, but at District Conventions--where the largest congregations have most representation. This further decreases the influence of small congregations and their pastors.

9. A reference to the Divine Call of the Synodical President, vice presidents and secretary is confusing. These have never been "called" positions, but are elected, *temporary* offices.

10. As it now works, a congregation can send an overture (resolution) to the District Convention or Synodical Convention. A series of proposals would limit this by giving precedence to overtures that are also adopted by circuits or districts. The effect would be to eliminate overtures that cut against the grain.

11. Finally, at the end there is this proposal, "All adopted doctrinal resolutions are to be honored and upheld by the members of Synod (pastors & congregations) in accordance with each resolution's intended status until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them," and, "The task force proposal clarifies and affirms that the Synod expects every member congregation of the Synod to respect its resolutions and to consider them of binding force on the assumption that they are in accordance with the Word of God and that they are applicable to the condition of the congregation." What this means is, if you disagree with the Synod majority on any issue that it decides is important, congregations and pastors *must* comply nonetheless, or face the possibility of repercussions. There is a caveat that this only applies if it is not an issue of the Word of God, but it nonetheless expresses a shift in the way the "third party" Synod thinks of its power and influence.