

# Messengers come to Indiana prepared to do business

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Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting spent a good deal of time at microphones during the five business sessions June 11–12 at the Indiana Convention Center.

From making a total of 50 motions to attempts at amending those motions or challenging the chair's ruling and from discussions around resolutions to sharing concerns with entity leaders, the nearly 11,000 Baptists registered as messengers came prepared to work.

What didn't garner much time or attention was the Cooperative Program and Executive Committee/SBC operating budgets for 2024–2025.

## **\$1.067 billion budget approved**

Messengers overwhelmingly approved with no discussion a \$1.067 billion Comprehensive Summary Operating Budget, which includes the EC/SBC operating budget of \$10.23 million. The descriptions and presentation of the budget information have been updated to include more specific details in both the income and expense sections.

The EC/SBC operating budget for 2024–2025 is a \$235,000 increase from the 2023–2024 budget, and the overall comprehensive budget (which used to be called the CP Allocation Budget) is \$28 million more than the current year's budget.

All entities received an increased allocation amount except the North American Mission Board, Ethics & Religious Liberty

Commission, New Orleans Seminary (funding amount based on full-time equivalent student hours) and the Historical Library and Archives.

**2024-2025 budget breakdown includes:**

Convention operations – \$10,235,000

International Mission Board – \$284,000,000

North American Mission Board – \$137,320,000

Lifeway Christian Resources – \$309,500,00

GuideStone Financial Resources – \$127,000,000

Gateway Seminary – \$12,900,000

Midwestern Seminary – \$35,340,000

New Orleans Seminary – \$24,896,500

Southeastern Seminary – \$33,177,000

Southern Seminary – \$53,328,964

Southwestern Seminary – \$35,600,000

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission – \$3,351,340

Historical Library and Archives – \$507,100

**Variety of motions and discussions**

Regarding motions presented, one resulted in the unseating of messengers from a Virginia church. The motion was brought by Aaron Decker from Red Village Church in Madison, Wisconsin.

A motion brought by Louis Cook, pastor of Oak City Baptist Church in Oak City, North Carolina, would have censured Southern Seminary President Albert Mohler, Lifeway President Ben Mandrell and SBC President Bart Barber (now immediate past

president) in relation to signing an amicus brief related to statute of limitations and sexual abuse.

While Barber had allowed the motion to be scheduled for discussion and a vote, messengers ultimately overturned his decision and ruled the motion out of order after hearing from several messengers at the mics, including Mandrell and Mohler.

Tom Ascol, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida, also put forth a motion to abolish ERLC, but it failed to receive the mandated two-thirds vote for approval. If it had been approved, then a second, successive vote would have been required next year for it to go into effect.

Five other motions also were rejected by messengers, including a review of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, a review of the work of the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force, an examination of all legal matters related to NAMB between 2017 and 2024, a removal of pledges of allegiance from convention activities (not to be unpatriotic but to keep the focus on Jesus) and a broadening of ERLC's fundraising opportunities.

Eight motions were ruled out of order, and 33 were referred to various entities.

### **Referred to EC**

-To consider how Southern Baptists from every cooperating state convention can serve on SBC boards, committees, commissions and institutions.

-To amend the BF&M to include affirmation of the Nicene, Apostles' and Athanasian creeds.

-To study the feasibility of remote participation in the SBC Annual Meeting.

-To prioritize funds to update SBC.net.

-To enable remote participation by messengers in the SBC

## Annual Meeting.

- To amend the Business and Financial Plan to ensure greater financial transparency.
- To require a two-thirds vote from messengers to approve all alterations to the BF&M 2000.
- To reallocate all CP funds from ERLC to IMB.
- To study elders and deacons in local churches.
- To amend Article 6 of the SBC Constitution related to qualifications for trustee service.
- To amend Bylaw 26B to allow for additional time for questions during entity reports.
- To require all entities to publish their conflict-of-interest policies.
- To amend the BF&M to include the Nicene Creed.
- To study how best to minister to the special needs community.
- To publish a schedule of all money the EC spent on legal matters between 2021 and 2024.
- To publish the names of messengers on both sides of the annual meeting nametags.
- To publish a schedule of all money spent on legal matters between 2021 and 2024.
- To publish the contact information for all entity trustees.
- To study the long-term effects of vaccine mandates by the IMB.
- To amend Bylaw 8, requiring the Credentials Committee to schedule a vote of messengers when a church is considered not in friendly cooperation and for the messengers' vote to be

final.

-To amend the SBC Business and Financial Plan to require all entities to share financial information similar to what is in Form 990.

-To amend Bylaw 20 related to the timing of the submission and review of resolutions.

-To amend the ministry assignment of the ERLC to address sexual abuse awareness and prevention or request EC to create a new entity to address sexual abuse awareness and prevention.

### **Referred to ERLC**

-For ERLC "to issue a formal apology to the EC for accusations of covering up sexual abuse."

### **Referred to IMB**

-To study Philippine indigenous Baptist pastors.

### **Referred to Lifeway**

-Publish textbooks for homeschool students.

### **Referred to NAMB**

-To undergo a forensic audit from the previous fiscal year.

-To study the need for Christian schools in impoverished and rural communities.

-To study how churches can be more effective in evangelism and baptisms.

### **Referred to all entities**

-To only use outside legal counsel whose values reflect the BF&M 2000 on gender and sexuality.

-To revise their codes of conducts related to alcohol.

-To request entity trustees explain how Calvinism (or reformed theology) is compatible with the BF&M 2000 and consider not promoting those beliefs in their entities.

-To publish a schedule of payments of more than \$5,000 paid to another entity.