

Amendment barring women pastors falls short again

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DALLAS—Once again, a constitutional amendment barring any church with a female pastor from the Southern Baptist Convention failed to reach the required two-thirds threshold of approval at the SBC annual meeting.

Messengers voted 3,421 to 2,191—60.74 percent to 38.90 percent—in favor of a motion to “clarify” only churches with male pastors are considered in “friendly cooperation” with the SBC.

However, since amendments to the SBC constitution require two-thirds approval at two consecutive annual meetings, the measure failed.

Juan Sanchez, senior pastor of High Pointe Baptist Church in Austin, made the motion to amend Article 3 of the convention’s constitution by adding as a qualification an SBC church: “Affirms, appoints or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture.”

The wording is identical to an amendment Mike Law, pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Arlington, Va., introduced at the [2023 SBC annual meeting](#), where messengers granted it the required level of approval.

[Last year](#), however, messengers voted 5,099 to 3,185—61.45 percent to 38.38 percent—in favor of the amendment, falling short of the required two-thirds affirmative vote.

‘Future guidelines for the Credentials

Committee'

Speaking in favor of the motion, Sanchez said the constitutional amendment is needed to “provide future guidelines for the Credentials Committee” as they rule whether a church is eligible to be affiliated with the SBC.

The proposed amendment would bring the constitutional requirement consistent with the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message, he noted.

Sanchez insisted the purpose is not to place unnecessary restrictions on service by women in church but to “free them to minister in appropriate roles.” He noted his church has a female children’s ministry director, and both men and women serve as deacons.

However, the church’s website identifies the congregation as “[elder-led](#)” and “congregationally governed,” and all of the [elders pictured on the site](#) are men.

In response to concerns the amendment could prompt litigation, Sanchez said, “There always will be legal concerns.”

While it is wise to seek the counsel of lawyers, he said, Southern Baptists are governed by the Bible, not by attorneys.

However, Executive Committee CEO Jeff Iorg said while he shares the same views as Sanchez about the pastoral role being limited to men, he pointed to legal risks.

When doctrinal guidelines are included in the convention’s constitution, it moves from being a matter determined by pastors and theologians to one decided “by attorneys and insurance companies.”

While Iorg failed to persuade a majority of messengers, Sanchez failed to

persuade the required two-thirds majority, and the amendment failed.