

The Executive Committee brings the following findings and action of censure against trustee Wade Burleson and asks that they be adopted by this Board:

Motion for Censure of Trustee Wade Burleson

Whereas the International Mission Board (IMB) exists for the purpose of leading Southern Baptists to be on mission with God to bring all peoples of the world to saving faith in Jesus Christ;

Whereas the trustees of the IMB are responsible for establishing overall policy and direction for the organization and conducting oversight of its operations in a manner that furthers the IMB's purpose;

Whereas Wade Burleson of Oklahoma presently serves as a trustee of the IMB;

Whereas Wade Burleson, like every other trustee of the IMB, serves as a trustee subject to the obligation to abide by the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities set forth in the Trustee and General Policy Manual;

Whereas the Trustee Standards of Conduct require trustees, among other things, to observe the following standards:

1. Individual IMB trustees must refrain from public criticism of Board approved actions. Experience has shown that it is not possible to draw fine lines in this area. Freedom of expression must give way to the imperative that the work of the Kingdom not be placed at risk by publicly airing differences within the Board.

2. Trustees must scrupulously avoid either the fact or the appearance of having disclosed information secured during closed or executive sessions of the full Board or any of its committees, or any other non-public information concerning Board operations (regardless of how and where secured) with persons who are not trustees or senior Board staff. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, quoting or sharing private conversations or statements by fellow trustees or senior Board staff with persons who are neither trustees nor senior Board staff.

Whereas the General Trustee Responsibilities set forth in the Trustee and General Policy Manual require trustees, among other things, to observe the following standards:

Trustees are **TO INTERPRET** international missions in their sphere of influence in the denomination—home, local church, association, state convention, and SBC, as an informed, enthusiastic advocate of global missions. In this respect, trustees are to speak in positive and supportive terms as they interpret and report on actions by the Board, regardless of whether they personally support the action.

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Trustees are **TO EXEMPLIFY** what it means to be Christ-like in decorum and sincerely committed to the Southern Baptist cooperative missions tasks. In this respect, trustees

are to speak the truth in love. Trustees are to refrain from speaking in disparaging terms about IMB personnel and fellow trustees.

Whereas the Board of Trustees finds that Wade Burleson has repeatedly failed to abide by the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities enumerated above. Some examples of the ways in which Wade Burleson has violated these standards and responsibilities include the following:

(a) He has repeatedly used his blog to share private communications with fellow trustees with persons who are neither trustees nor senior Board staff, in violation of the Trustee Standards of Conduct. Examples of these include the following: blog post of September 12, 2007 (posting of private conversation with trustee John Floyd); blog post of September 12, 2007 (posting of private conversation with trustee Jerry Corbaley); blog post of October 23, 2007 (posting of private letter written by trustee Jerry Corbaley to fellow trustees); blog post of July 18, 2007 (posting of private communication with trustee Jerry Corbaley). He has also shared, by email, private communications with fellow trustees with persons who are neither trustees nor senior Board staff, in violation of the Trustee Standards of Conduct (*see, e.g.*, November 1, 2007 email to trustee John Floyd);

(b) He has spoken in disparaging terms about fellow trustees. Examples of these include the following: blog post of July 18, 2007 (disparaging comments concerning trustee Jerry Corbaley); blog post of July 20, 2007 (disparaging comments concerning trustee Winston Curtis); blog post of September 12, 2007 (disparaging comments concerning trustee Jerry Corbaley and leadership of trustee John Floyd); blog post of October 23, 2007 (disparaging comments concerning trustee Jerry Corbaley);

(c) He has spoken in terms that are not positive and supportive of the Board when interpreting and reporting on actions by the Board. Examples of these include the following: blog post and comments of July 10, 2007 (critical of Board policy on requirements for appointment of missionaries); blog post of July 6, 2007 (same); blog post of July 3, 2007 (same); blog post of June 13, 2007 (same); blog post of June 7, 2007 (same).

Whereas the IMB Executive Committee met with Burleson on the afternoon of November 5, 2007 out of concern for his ongoing violations of the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities and out of a desire to bring about reconciliation between Burleson and the other trustees. Trustee Chairman John Floyd asked Burleson if he would apologize for his violations of the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities and expressed to Burleson his desire to see Burleson appointed to board committees and serve as a fully-functioning trustee, using his strengths and gifts to further the work of the IMB;

Whereas following that meeting of the Executive Committee, two trustee members of the Executive Committee and a senior IMB staff member met with Burleson on the evening of November 5, 2007 for further discussion. Burleson was asked to apologize for the following violations:

(a) Making public private communications with fellow trustees;

- (b) Speaking in a way that reflected poorly on fellow trustees; and
- (c) Publicly criticizing board approved actions instead of speaking in positive and supportive terms as he interpreted and reported on actions of the Board of Trustees, regardless of whether he personally supported those actions.

Whereas specific instances of each of these violations were cited to Burleson. Burleson acknowledged these violations to the two trustee members of the Executive Committee and the senior IMB staff member. Burleson stated that the violations regarding speaking in a way that reflected poorly on his fellow trustees were *unintentional* offenses for which he would gladly apologize. However, he stated that he *intentionally* chose to make public private communications with trustees and that he *intentionally* chose to publicly criticize board approved actions instead of speaking in positive and supportive terms as he interpreted and reported on board actions. Burleson further stated that he would not apologize for these intentional violations of the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities. Burleson stated that he had voted against these standards of conduct when they were adopted because he believed in the principle of dissent. Burleson further added that he had refused to abide by these standards of conduct after they were adopted and that he desired to bring the issue to the SBC;

Whereas the Executive Committee subsequently reconvened on the evening of November 5, 2007 to hear from the two trustee members of the Executive Committee and senior IMB staff member report on their conversation with Burleson.

Whereas the Executive Committee determined that it was appropriate to recommend censure by the full Board of Trustees for Burleson's intentional and unapologetic violations of the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities;

Whereas the IMB Board of Trustees is empowered to enforce the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities and censure individual trustees who do not abide by these standards and responsibilities;

THEREFORE, based on the findings enumerated above, the IMB Board of Trustees hereby orders that the following action be taken with regard to trustee Wade Burleson:

(a) Wade Burleson is hereby officially censured by this Board for his violation of the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities;

(b) Wade Burleson is hereby officially suspended from *any* active involvement with the Board of Trustees for at least the next four IMB trustee meetings. This suspension means, without limitation, that Burleson will not be allowed to participate in any meeting or business of the Trustee Board, serve on any trustee committee, or be reimbursed for expenses of travel to any trustee meeting or business. This suspension will be reviewed after the four trustee meetings have occurred. The Executive Committee will make a determination at that time whether the suspension should be lifted. If prior to that time, Burleson makes an apology to the Board for his violations of the Trustee Standards of Conduct and Trustee Responsibilities, commits to working within the structure and policies of the Board, and agrees to refrain from blogging about the IMB, the Executive Committee will consider lifting the above restrictions.

