



Membership Standards Update and Resources

May 2015

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To: Council Key 3

Re: Membership Standards Update and Resources

As a follow-up to Dr. Gates' speech at the 2015 National Annual Meeting, we would like to share additional direction for managing communications about membership standards with various audiences. Dr. Gates' remarks can be found on [Scouting Newsroom](#).

To best prepare you in the near-term, we developed the following materials and counsel for your communications with internal and external audiences:

- [Media statement](#)
- [One-page summary of Dr. Gates' speech](#)
- [Key messages](#)
- [Talking points](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)

While no decisions have been made, the National Executive Board will consider a policy that reinforces the right of religious chartered organizations to continue to select leaders consistent with their organization's religious beliefs. A decision is expected no later than the Boy Scouts of America's National Executive Board meeting in October.

If you have additional questions or require additional communications resources, please contact the National Communications team at PR@scouting.org.

Thank you,



Wayne Brock
Chief Scout Executive
Boy Scouts of America

MEDIA RELATIONS

Please direct all media inquiries to PR@Scouting.org where the National Communications team is monitoring and responding to media inquiries with the following statement. Do not proactively engage with media about this matter. If needed, below is the national media statement.

National Media Statement

“During the 2015 Boy Scouts of America National Annual Meeting, National President Dr. Robert M. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect in the days and months ahead on the challenges facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them.

“Dr. Gates’ remarks speak for themselves and the full text can be found at [Scouting Newsroom](#).

“It is important to note that no decisions were made during the National Annual Meeting. A decision is expected no later than the Boy Scouts of America’s National Executive Board meeting in October.

“The BSA remains committed to working together to deliver the nation’s foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training and will continue to accomplish incredible things for the young people and communities we serve.”

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SUMMARY OF DR. GATES’ SPEECH

The text and video of Dr. Gates’ speech at the National Annual Meeting is available on [Scouting Newsroom](#). The following provides highlights of his remarks.

- On Thursday, May 21, Boy Scouts of America National President Dr. Robert M. Gates delivered remarks to thousands of Scouting volunteers and professionals. The full text of Dr. Gates’ remarks and a video of his speech can be found on [Scouting Newsroom](#).
- Dr. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect in the days and months ahead on the challenges, primarily regarding membership standards, facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them.
- Dr. Gates described political, social, and legal issues—including new state laws creating employment protections on the basis of sexual orientation, an upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision on gay marriage, and intense debates in Indiana and Arkansas—that are creating significant challenges for the BSA.
- Dr. Gates believes the BSA is in an unsustainable and vulnerable position. He advocates that the BSA seize control of its own future, set its own course, and change the policy in order to allow religious chartered organizations—those organizations that sponsor units—to determine the standards for their Scout leaders.

- Moving toward a policy that accepts and respects different perspectives and beliefs allows religious organizations—based on First Amendment protection of religious freedom—to establish their own standards for adult leaders and will help preserve the Boy Scouts of America for generations to come.
- It is important to note that no decisions were made during the National Annual Meeting. A decision is expected no later than the Boy Scouts of America’s National Executive Board meeting in October.
- You may add your voice to this discussion by sending an email to key3@scouting.org. We cannot promise a response, but all messages will be read.

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KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages serve as the foundation for all communications—written and spoken. They are not intended for external use in their current form below.

Why We Must Change:

- During the 2015 Boy Scouts of America National Annual Meeting, Dr. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect in the days and months ahead on the challenges, primarily regarding adult leadership standards, facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them. Dr. Gates’ remarks can be found on [Scouting Newsroom](#).
- The BSA had hoped that the decision in 2013 would give it time to refocus on the Scouting program. However, internal challenges and urgent legal conflicts have placed the BSA in an unsustainable position.
- We face increasing legal challenges at the federal, state, and local levels. Today, 21 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 140 cities and counties have enacted laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This includes employment matters as well as some state attorneys general requiring the BSA to follow state laws. Thus, we face the very real prospect of litigation in multiple states in the very near future.
- Impending legal action means a court could make an overly broad ruling forbidding any kind of membership standard, including our foundational belief in “duty to God.” The best way to avoid this possibility is for the BSA to set its own course.
- The reason for readdressing this issue is to preserve the BSA and ensure it continues to provide life-changing experiences to youth they can’t get anywhere else.

Why the Religious Chartered Organization Option Is Right for Scouting:

- The BSA is considering the removal of the national adult leader restriction related to sexual orientation, while preserving the rights of our religious chartered organizations and respecting their diverse beliefs.
- While no decisions have been made, the National Executive Board will consider a policy that reinforces the right of religious chartered organization to continue to select leaders consistent with their organization's religious beliefs. A decision is expected no later than the Boy Scouts of America's National Executive Board meeting in October.
- This revision will allow Scouting's members and parents to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. No one in Scouting will be asked to join a unit that compromises their personal religious values, and the BSA will continue to legally defend (indemnify) the rights of its religious chartered organizations.
- It remains the position of the Boy Scouts of America that the ideals and principles of "duty to God" and "A Scout is reverent" set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.

Focusing on Scouting's Mission:

- It's important to note the BSA has, and will continue to have, a strict behavioral standard for its youth members and adult leaders. Scouting is not an appropriate environment to discuss sexual conduct. Also, no member may use Scouting to promote or advance a social or political position or agenda.
- Since 1910, the Boy Scouts of America has relied on chartered organizations to oversee and deliver the Scouting program in local communities. Nationally, Scouting represents nearly 2.4 million youth and nearly 1 million adult members with diverse beliefs. We teach our members to treat everyone with courtesy and respect at all times, regardless of any perceived difference.
- Scouting will continue to focus on reaching and serving youth to help them grow into good, strong citizens. By focusing on the goals that unite us, we are able to accomplish incredible things for young people and the communities we serve.
- Anyone wishing to have their voice heard may send an email to key3@scouting.org. We cannot promise a response, but all messages will be read.

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TALKING POINTS

We understand there is tremendous interest in the BSA's discussion about membership standards. The following talking points are a guide to general discussion on the topic. Please note that some messages are targeted to specific key audiences and you should tailor your discussion as needed.

- Thank you for supporting Scouting. Your commitment helps the BSA deliver life-changing experiences to youth that they cannot get anywhere else. We appreciate you (and your organization) very much.
- During the 2015 Boy Scouts of America National Annual Meeting, Dr. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect in the days and months ahead on the challenges, primarily regarding adult leadership standards, facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them.
- We had hoped that the decision in 2013 would give us time to refocus on the Scouting program. However, internal challenges and urgent legal conflicts have placed the BSA in an unsustainable position.
- We face increasing legal challenges at the federal, state, and local levels. Today, 21 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 140 cities and counties have enacted laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
- Impending legal action means a court could make an overly broad ruling forbidding any kind of membership standard, including our foundational belief in "duty to God." The best way to avoid this possibility is for the BSA to set its own course.
- The BSA is considering the removal of the national adult leader restriction related to sexual orientation, while preserving the rights of our religious chartered organizations and respecting their diverse beliefs.
- Scouting's members and parents will be able to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. No one in Scouting will be asked to join a unit that compromises their personal religious values, and the BSA will continue to legally defend (indemnify) the rights of its religious chartered organizations.
- While no decisions have been made, the National Executive Board will consider a policy that reinforces the right of religious chartered organizations to continue to select leaders consistent with their organization's religious beliefs. A decision is expected no later than the Boy Scouts of America's National Executive Board meeting in October.
- The reason for readdressing this issue is to preserve the BSA and ensure it continues to provide life-changing experiences to youth they can't get anywhere else.
- It's important to note the BSA has, and will continue to have, a strict behavioral standard for its youth members and adult leaders.

- If you'd like to add your voice to this discussion, you may send an email to key3@scouting.org.
- Dr. Gates' remarks and a video of his speech can be found on [Scouting Newsroom](#).

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following represent the most frequently asked questions you are likely to receive as well as recommended responses. These, in their current form, are intended for internal use only, but individual answers can be used with external audiences as needed.

1. Did the BSA policy on sexual orientation change?

During the 2015 Boy Scouts of America National Annual Meeting, Dr. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect in the days and months ahead on the challenges, primarily regarding adult leadership standards, facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them. Dr. Gates' remarks can be on [Scouting Newsroom](#).

The BSA is considering the removal of the national adult leader restriction related to sexual orientation, while preserving the rights of our religious chartered organizations and respecting their diverse beliefs.

This revision will allow Scouting's members and parents to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. No one in Scouting will be asked to join a unit that compromises their personal religious values, and the BSA will continue to legally defend (indemnify) the rights of its religious chartered organizations.

2. Why is the BSA considering this change now?

The BSA had hoped that the decision in 2013 would give it time to refocus on the Scouting program. However, internal challenges and urgent legal conflicts have placed the BSA in an unsustainable position.

We face increasing legal challenges at the federal, state, and local levels. Today, 21 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 140 cities and counties have enacted laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This includes employment matters as well as some state attorneys general requiring the BSA to follow state laws. Thus, we face the very real prospect of litigation in multiple states in the very near future.

Impending legal action means a court could make an overly broad ruling forbidding any kind of membership standard, including our foundational belief in "duty to God." The best way to avoid this possibility is for the BSA to set its own course.

3. When will a decision be made?

While no decisions have been made the National Executive Board will consider a policy that reinforces the right of religious chartered organizations to continue to select leaders consistent with their organization's religious beliefs. A decision is expected no later than the Boy Scouts of America's National Executive Board meeting in October.

4. How will this decision be made?

The process by which a decision will be reached will take shape in the coming weeks. You may send suggestions for the process to key3@scouting.org. We cannot promise a response, but all messages will be read.

5. Will there be a vote of the entire membership?

The process by which a decision will be reached will take shape in the coming weeks, and a decision is expected no later than the next National Executive Board meeting in October.

6. Why does the religious chartered organization option make sense for the organization?

While no decisions have been made, the National Executive Board will consider a policy that reinforces the right of religious chartered organizations to continue to select leaders consistent with their organization's religious beliefs.

This revision will allow Scouting's members and parents to select local units, chartered to organizations with similar beliefs, that best meet the needs of their families. No one in Scouting will be asked to join a unit that compromises their personal religious values, and the BSA will continue to legally defend (indemnify) the rights of its religious chartered organizations.

7. Will non-religious chartered organizations have an option in this matter?

No. However, as they always have, all chartered organizations will select their leaders and can require youth members and adult leaders to demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others. Under this policy, only religious chartered organizations would be able to have a restriction for adult leaders related to sexual orientation.

8. Is this the result of recent lawsuits or pressure from activists and sponsors?

We face increasing legal challenges at the federal, state, and local levels. Today, 21 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 140 cities and counties have enacted laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This includes employment matters as well as some state attorneys general requiring the BSA to follow state laws. Thus, we face the very real prospect of litigation in multiple states in the very near future.

9. Does the BSA now admit its policies discriminate against those of same-sex orientation?

Nationally, Scouting represents nearly 2.4 million youth and nearly 1 million adult members with diverse beliefs. We teach our members to treat everyone with courtesy and respect at all times, regardless of any perceived difference. Scouting is not an appropriate environment to discuss sexual conduct. And no member may use Scouting to promote or advance a social or political position or agenda.

10. Will the Boy Scouts of America indemnify both religiously affiliated chartered organizations and civic-based chartered organizations?

The BSA will continue to legally defend (indemnify) the rights of its religious chartered organizations.

11. Will you pull the charters of those not currently following the BSA’s membership standards? Will you continue to remove openly gay adult leaders?

The BSA has directed local councils to follow state employment laws. Most importantly, the BSA will not keep kids from enjoying Scouting. We will work to ensure that Scouting continues to provide life-changing experiences to youth they can’t get anywhere else. As we have always done, the BSA will review each issue on a case-by-case basis and continue to treat everyone with courtesy and respect.

12. If the BSA lifts the restriction regarding same-sex orientation for adult leaders, will it also consider eliminating the “duty to God” standard?

No. It remains the position of the Boy Scouts of America that the ideals and principles of “duty to God” and “A Scout is reverent” set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.

13. Do you anticipate reviewing the policy yet again to mandate for religious chartered organizations?

No. The reason for readdressing this issue now is to preserve the BSA and ensure it continues to provide life-changing experiences to youth they can’t get anywhere else. The BSA is considering the removal of the national adult leader restriction related to sexual orientation, while preserving the rights of our religious chartered organizations and respecting their diverse beliefs.

14. What if an adult volunteer leader or a unit doesn’t agree with this proposed change?

As a voluntary, private organization, the Boy Scouts of America sets policies that are best for the organization. All adult leaders and local units agree to follow the BSA’s national policies. It is important to note the BSA has, and will continue to have, a strict behavioral standard for its youth members and adult leaders. Scouting is not an appropriate environment to discuss sexual conduct. And no member may use Scouting to promote or advance a social or political position or agenda.

15. Whom do I contact for clarification or additional questions?

If you are a Scout executive or local council communications or marketing professional, please contact PR@scouting.org with additional questions or needs. If you would like to share your perspective on this matter, you may send an email to key3@scouting.org. We cannot promise a response, but all messages will be read.

16. What do I do if I get a media inquiry?

Please direct all media inquiries to PR@scouting.org where the National Communications team is monitoring and responding to media inquiries with the following statement. We request that you do not proactively engage with media about this matter.

“During the 2015 Boy Scouts of America National Annual Meeting, National President Dr. Robert M. Gates encouraged the Scouting family to reflect in the days and months ahead on the challenges facing the BSA and potential alternatives for addressing them.

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“The BSA remains committed to working together to deliver the nation’s foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training and will continue to accomplish incredible things for the young people and communities we serve.”

17. Where should I send members of our Scouting family who wish to express their opinions on this matter?

If you would like to share your perspective on this matter, you may send an email to key3@scouting.org. We cannot promise a response, but all messages will be read.