



# BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA<sup>®</sup>

## NATIONAL COUNCIL

Wayne Brock  
Chief Scout Executive

June 12, 2013

To Baptist Churches That Operate Scouting Units:

As you may be aware, at the BSA's National Annual Meeting in May, the voting members of the National Council approved a resolution to remove the restriction denying membership to youth on the basis of sexual orientation alone.

Some have taken this action to mean the BSA has made a fundamental shift in values. On June 12, the Southern Baptist Convention presented and passed a resolution that discusses the change of membership policy of the Boy Scouts of America (for youth only).

We have a deep respect for the Southern Baptist Convention and all other Baptist churches that use Scouting in their youth ministries, along with their religious beliefs as they relate to issues of homosexuality. We understand the change in policy has raised questions and concerns and want to take this opportunity to address them.

### **The BSA's Membership Standards Policy**

The BSA policy is effective Jan. 1, 2014. Under the revised policy, no youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone. When reviewing this policy, it's very important to understand what will change and what will remain the same.

#### ***What is staying the same?***

- Scouting's chartered organizations have the right to uphold their own moral standards within the units they sponsor.
- Any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting.
- Members must demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
- No member may use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda.

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- The adult membership standards policy was not under consideration and remains unchanged. Within the framework of this policy, chartered organizations have the right and responsibility to choose their own unit leaders.
- The Scout Oath begins with duty to God, and the Scout Law ends with a Scout's obligation to be reverent, and that will always remain a core value of the Boy Scouts of America.

### ***What has changed?***

- A youth member simply stating he or she is attracted to the same sex, but not engaging in sexual activity, does not make them ineligible for membership.

### **The Southern Baptist Convention Resolution**

The following are three key questions raised in the Southern Baptist Convention resolution, which we want to address with you directly.

- 1. Was this change the result of “homosexual activists”? Is this merely the first step in a process that will fundamentally change the BSA?**

No. It's important to know this policy change was the result of an internal Scouting discussion, not because of pressure from external groups. The adult membership standard remains unchanged, and within the framework of this policy, chartered organizations continue to have the right and responsibility to choose their own unit leaders. The Boy Scouts of America fully supports our chartered organizations. As the National Executive Committee just completed a lengthy review process, there are no plans for further review on this matter. The youth membership standard was not intended or seen to be a “first step.”

- 2. Is the Boy Scouts of America condoning homosexuality or contradicting the Baptist faith that states “Christians should oppose...all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography.”**

No. The intent of this policy is not to discuss the broad issue of homosexuality. Its intent is that a young person simply stating he or she is attracted to the same sex, but not engaging in sexual activity, does not make them ineligible for membership. That said, it is very important to understand the BSA is not condoning homosexuality or forcing its chartered organizations to do the same. The Boy Scouts of America fully supports our chartered organizations and respects the deeply held religious beliefs about homosexuality of many of our chartered organizations.

- 3. Does this policy complicate basic understanding of male friends, needlessly politicize human sexuality, and heighten sexual tension within the Boy Scouts?**

No. Any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting. Members must demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others and is consistent at all times with the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Scouting's chartered organizations have the right to uphold their own moral standards within the units they sponsor. And, no member may use Scouting to promote or advance any social or political position or agenda. Also, the BSA has stringent policies that protect the safety and privacy of youth and adult members and has always worked to ensure that it is a supportive and safe environment for young people. Last, to further prepare the organization, the BSA has created an implementation task force to make sure it is ready on the effective date of Jan. 1, 2014.

### **A Christian Perspective**

Again, to be clear, Scouting's youth member policy is not about the BSA condoning homosexuality, or forcing its chartered organizations to do the same. This change allows Scouting to be more compassionate in its response to a young person who expresses a same-sex attraction, but is not engaging in sexual activity, by no longer calling for their automatic removal from the Scouting program. We believe this is the same approach most congregations use with their youth group members, allowing them to continue to use the Scouting program while remaining true to their beliefs.

By prohibiting any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age, and requiring all members to demonstrate behavior that exemplifies the highest level of good conduct and respect for others, we believe the BSA policy is fully consistent with how Baptist churches respond to young people in their congregations. In short, it allows Scouting and chartered organizations to maintain their beliefs about homosexuality and, as stated in the Southern Baptist Convention resolution, allows you to "declare your love in Christ for all young people regardless of their perceived sexual orientation."

### **Additional Information**

America's youth needs Scouting, and we sincerely hope everyone stays with the Boy Scouts of America. By focusing on the goals that unite us, we can continue to accomplish incredible things for young people and the youth we serve.

The BSA has been and remains committed to engaging in discussion with its members about this policy. To learn more about the new membership standard, please visit [www.bsamembershipstandards.org](http://www.bsamembershipstandards.org). Also, you may find these two links from [The Baptist Standard](#) and the [Association of Baptist Scouters](#) helpful.

Our local council professionals and volunteers are available to review the membership standard and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and thank you in advance for your support of Scouting and all you do for your community.

Sincerely yours,

*Wayne Brock*

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