



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the BSA's current membership standards policy?

The BSA's membership policy is:

Youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America is open to all who meet the membership requirements. Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Varsity Scouting are for boys. Venturing is for young men and young women.

The applicant must possess the moral, educational, and emotional qualities that the Boy Scouts of America deems necessary to afford positive leadership to youth. The applicant must also be the correct age, subscribe to the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle, and abide by the Scout Oath or Promise and the Scout Law.

While the BSA does not proactively inquire about the sexual orientation of employees, volunteers, or members, we do not grant membership to individuals who are open or avowed homosexuals or who engage in behavior that would become a distraction to the mission of the BSA.

2. What is the resolution being considered?

The proposed resolution is:

Youth membership in the Boy Scouts of America is open to all youth who meet the specific membership requirements to join the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, and Venturing programs. Membership in any program of the Boy Scouts of America requires the youth member to (a) subscribe to and abide by the values expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law, (b) subscribe to and abide by the precepts of the Declaration of Religious Principle (duty to God), and (c) 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 youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.

Also, the resolution states that the Boy Scouts of America will maintain its current membership policy for all adult leaders.

3. Why is this resolution good for the BSA?

This proposal acknowledges changes in society while remaining true to Scouting's mission and is reflective of how our major religious chartered organizations operate. Our vision is to serve every eligible youth in America, and this policy would allow us to serve more kids and focus on their development.





4. How did you arrive at this resolution?

The BSA has engaged in an internal dialogue by hosting informative town hall–style meetings at more than 250 local councils across the nation, discussed the issue with nonprofit and youth-serving organizations’ executive leaders, spoken with private and corporate donors, and engaged experts in the fields of youth protection and safety. Also, Scouting interacted with chartered organization representatives, leaders, parents, and members of alumni organizations through a survey sent to 1.1 million members of the Scouting family, and collected feedback through a national survey of parents and a Harris Interactive Survey of the nation’s youth.

This information helped the officers work on a resolution regarding membership standards.

5. What did your research find?

This discussion created an outpouring of feedback from the Scouting family and the American public, from both those who agree with the current policy and those who support a change. This feedback reinforced how deeply people care about Scouting and how passionate they are about the organization.

Research the officers considered to be critical to the development of a resolution includes:

- Attitudes and opinions among Americans related to gay and lesbian relationships have changed rapidly over the past three years.
- While a majority of those adults in the Scouting community support the BSA’s current policy of excluding open and avowed homosexuals, younger parents and teens tend to oppose the policy.
- Views among parents (under age 50) have changed significantly in the past three years, with more now opposing than supporting the BSA’s membership policy.
- Parents in three of four BSA regions oppose the BSA’s current membership policy.
- Of six scenarios presented, the one scenario presented in the Voice of the Scout survey with which overwhelming majorities of parents, teens, and adults in the Scouting community strongly agree is that it would be unacceptable to deny an openly gay Scout an Eagle Scout Award solely because of his sexual orientation.
- Parents, teens, and adults in the Scouting community do not favor a local chartered organization option.
- While adults in the Scouting community strongly support the current membership policy, they are less likely to agree with removing a youth from the program solely based on his sexual orientation as opposed to behavior.





6. Why propose a youth-only resolution and not change the adult policy?

The review confirmed that this issue remains among the most complex and challenging issues facing the BSA and society today. Even with the wide range of input, it was extremely difficult to accurately quantify the potential impact of maintaining or changing the current policy. While perspectives and opinions vary significantly, parents, adults in the Scouting community, and teens alike tend to agree that youth should not be denied the benefits of Scouting.

7. What will you do when a youth member becomes an adult?

When members are no longer a youth participant, they must meet the requirements of our adult standards.

8. How do you define behavior?

Scouting is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting.

9. What do you say to those who allege you stacked the questions to engineer a result?

Throughout this process, Scouting embarked on the most comprehensive listening exercise in its history, gathering perspectives from inside and outside of the Scouting family.

- Over the course of nearly three months, more than 200,000 BSA members and leaders participated in research.
- A national survey captured the perceptions of 800 parents of boys.
- More than 1,000 teenagers (ages 16–18) participated in a national survey.
- Approximately 270 local councils provided input.
- More than 100 religious and community organizations participated.
- More than 50,000 BSA alumni and donors participated.

The survey was developed by the third-party research provider North Star Opinion Research, with input from volunteers and professionals representing diverse viewpoints.

10. What are the next steps regarding the resolution?

This resolution and information will be shared with the voting members of the National Council later this month, beginning the education phase of the project. This will lead to the decision phase, culminating with the voting members of the National Council taking action on the resolution at the National Annual Meeting in May.





11. Who are the voting members of the National Council?

The voting members of the National Council of the Boy Scouts are defined in the Boy Scouts of America's bylaws. Commissioned professionals do not vote. Members of the National Council eligible to vote include:

- Elected members of the National Executive Board and the chairman of the National Advisory Council and National Eagle Scout Association president, and those registered youth members appointed by the president with the approval of the Executive Board (national Venturing president and national Order of the Arrow chief)
- Members of regional boards, which consist of regional executive committees, the area presidents, youth members appointed by the regional president to serve as members of the regional committee, and those members elected annually by the region
- National Council voting members elected by local councils based upon their Dec. 31, 2012, enrolled traditional youth membership (Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers). These voting members are elected on the basis of one voting member to the National Council for every 5,000 youth members (NOT including Learning for Life participants or Explorers) and one additional voting member for a major portion thereof (2,501 or more).
- Local council presidents and local council commissioners
- Members at large, who are elected by the National Council at its National Annual Meeting to serve for one year, and persons who become members of the national Administration and Finance Standing Committee, Council Operations Committee, Development Standing Committee, Human Resources Standing Committee, Information Delivery Standing Committee, Marketing Standing Committee, Outdoor Activities Standing Committee, Regional Presidents' Committee, and Supply Committee

All National Council members (those eligible to vote) received notification and confirmation of their status on or before April 10.

The names and addresses of all members of the Boy Scouts of America—including National Council members elected by the local council—are confidential, as mandated by the bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America, except where applicable state law may require otherwise.

12. How many voters are there?

There are approximately 1,400 voters. Prior to the National Annual Meeting, the number will be finalized and the national office will issue certificates of membership and voting credentials to all National Council voting members. Votes must be cast in person at the meeting and not by proxy.





13. Does a voter have to be present to vote?

Yes, a member must be present to vote.

14. How are the voting members being encouraged to vote? Do they have to represent their councils, or can they vote according to their beliefs?

As defined by the national and local council bylaws, local council representatives who are National Council (voting) members have a responsibility to represent the point of view of the local council. It is up to each council and each voting member of the National Council to determine how to fulfill these obligations in a manner that fulfills their responsibility to both the Boy Scouts of America and to their local council. Neither the local council bylaws nor the bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America set forth how the “point of view of the council” is to be determined.

The bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America do not specifically dictate how members of the National Executive Board, members of regional executive committees, or members at large are to vote, but given their role(s), the expectation is that they would vote based on their belief as to what is in the best interest of Scouting.

15. Does the Executive Committee support passage of this resolution?

Yes. The committee unanimously agreed that this resolution is in the best interest of Scouting.

16. What will happen if the voters reject this resolution?

There will be no changes to the current policy.

17. When will you next review the policy?

The Executive Committee just completed a lengthy review process. There are no plans for further review.

18. Has or will the Boy Scouts review(ed) the “duty to God” standard?

No. The Scout Oath begins with duty to God, and the Scout Law ends with a Scout’s obligation to be reverent. Those will always remain core values of the Boy Scouts of America. The values set forth in the Scout Oath and Law are fundamental to the BSA and central to teaching young people to make better choices over their lifetimes.

19. Will local units be able to deny membership to youth based on sexual orientation?

If passed, no youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.

20. Will this increase or decrease membership?

It’s impossible to link membership increases or decreases to any one issue.

