



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 31, 2013

Calif. Senate Votes to Drop Boy Scouts' Tax Exempt Status

The California State Senate voted May 29 to drop the Boy Scouts' tax exempt status because of the organization's refusal to allow homosexual scout leaders. The vote, which must also be approved by the state's Assembly, came less than a week after the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) [approved a change](#) in its 103-year-old policy that will now allow boys who identify as gay to participate in the scouting program.



Senate Bill 323, which was introduced in February by openly homosexual state Senator Ricardo Lara, would revoke the tax-exempt status of all non-profit youth organizations that discriminate based on gender identity or sexual orientation. The timing of the bill and comments by Lara, however, made it clear that the main target of the measure is the BSA.

"They are out of line with the values of California and should be ineligible for a tax benefit paid for by all Californians," Lara was quoted by the [Sacramento Bee](#) as saying regarding the Boy Scouts. "SB 323 brings our laws into line with our values."

Lara insisted that while allowing gay-identifying boys to participate in scouting is a step in the right direction for the Boys Scouts, "continuing a ban on [homosexual] adults is based on absurd assumptions and stereotypes that perpetuate hate and homophobia. What does this mean, that up until 17 you're fine to be in the Boy Scouts but on midnight of your 18th birthday you turn into a pedophile or a predator? What kind of warped message does this send?"

Added the homosexual legislator: "We've given the Boy Scouts ample time to solve their discrimination problem. And they've chosen a path that still leads to discrimination."

The bill, which needed two-thirds support for passage, squeaked by the Senate on a 27-to-9 vote, with three senators — a Democrat and two Republicans — abstaining.

Karen England of California's [Capitol Resource Institute](#), a pro-family lobbying group, said that Lara "did not speak for us all ... when he claimed SB 323 brings our laws in line with our values. This bill is about government vilifying our values and abusing its power to penalize, through taxation, those who hold different beliefs and values. SB 323 is an unprecedented intrusion by the government and a far-reaching assault on freedoms of association, speech, and religion."

In a statement Boy Scouts spokesman Deron Smith responded to the legislative effort, saying that "today, more than ever, youth need the character and leadership programs of Scouting. We are disappointed with anything that impacts our ability to serve more youth."

If the bill is passed by the State Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown, the BSA and other youth groups that do not meet California's non-discrimination standards would be forced to pay corporate taxes on donations, membership dues, and camp fees, in addition to sales tax on food and other items sold at fund-raisers.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the BSA's decision to welcome gay-identifying boys, churches with longtime ties to the BSA have begun their exodus from the organization. Frank Page, president of the executive



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committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nation's largest Protestant denomination, told [ABC News](#) that the BSA policy change would be on the docket for discussion at the SBC 's national meeting in June, and the recommendation would be that the denomination's 47,000 U.S. churches cut ties with the Boy Scouts. "I think I can say with pretty strong accuracy that the vast majority of Southern Baptists are very disappointed in the latest change in policy," Page said, "deeply disappointed."

Some 70 percent of all Boy Scout troops are sponsored by churches or religious groups, according to the BSA, and Page said that the SBC sponsors "hundreds of troops, probably thousands." He said that the decision to cut ties with the Boy Scouts is based on the SBC's intention to have its members conduct themselves by a biblical standard. We don't hate people," Page emphasized. "We don't hate anybody, but we just felt like there's got to be some objective standard, and we felt [the Boy Scouts] were maintaining that until recently."

One of the first high-profile congregations to announce its exodus from Scouting was Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, a mega-congregation with about 300 families participating in the church-sponsored Boy Scout program. "Truly, for us it's a logical decision," the church's Executive Pastor, Tim Hester, told the Louisville [Courier-Journal](#) newspaper. "We cannot be distracted from the mission God has called us to."

In Helena, Alabama, a suburb of Birmingham, Pastor Greg Walker of First Baptist Church told WBRC-TV news that his church would also drop its Boy Scout program, saying that he could not allow his church "to openly support a sinful lifestyle." Walker reflected that "it's hard on a personal level to say to a troop of young boys who have done nothing wrong and to the leaders, 'You're not welcome here.'"

Similarly, the Rev. Mike Shaw, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pelham, Alabama, told the *Birmingham News* that his congregation would drop its partnership with the BSA. "We're not doing it out of hatred," he said, but "the teachings of Scripture are very clear on this. We're doing it because it violates the clear teaching of Scripture."

And in [Bremerton, Washington](#) near Seattle, Father Derek Lappe of [Our Lady Star of the Sea](#) parish said that after many years of sponsorship his Catholic parish would also cut its ties to the Boy Scouts. "It was a very difficult decision, it's a very sad thing," he said, "with the long legacy we have of scouting in this parish."

Lappe explained that the new Boy Scout policy simply doesn't align with the teachings of the Catholic Church. "My concern is this definition of a young man, a 10 to 18 year old boy as 'openly gay' or 'openly homosexual,'" he told [King5.com](#). "How is that supposed to be lived out within what we believe as Catholics and what we teach about Catholics."

Photo of California State Senate Chamber in Sacramento, California: AP Images



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