



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 27, 2014

Robert Gates, Who Helped Dismantle DADT, Elected to Lead Boy Scouts

Robert Gates, whose efforts as Defense Secretary in 2010 helped to overturn the ban on homosexuals in the military, has taken over as head of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). Gates was chosen for the post in October 2013, two months before the BSA [implemented a policy change](#) allowing boys who self-identify as homosexuals to participate in Scouting. But while the BSA still bans homosexual adults to serve as Scout leaders, in [comments May 23](#) as he was formally elected at the BSA annual national meeting, Gates indicated that had he been in leadership at the time, he would have pushed to allow homosexual Scout leaders.



“In all candor, I would have supported going further, as I did in opening the way for gays to serve in the CIA and in the military,” Gates announced in his prepared remarks. [Slate.com](#) quoted Gates as admitting, “I was prepared to go further than the decision that was made. I would have supported having gay Scoutmasters.”

However, Gates, an Eagle Scout as well as the nation’s former CIA director, said that for the time being he is willing to follow the BSA’s continuing ban on homosexual adults. “Given the strong feelings — the passion — involved on both sides of this matter,” said Gates, “I believe strongly that to reopen the membership issue or try to take last year’s decision to the next step would irreparably fracture and perhaps even provoke a formal, permanent split in this movement.”

As it was, the vote to allow “gay” Boy Scouts prompted a mass exodus of boys, parents, and religious organizations from the BSA, with scores of Boys Scout troops sponsored by Catholic, Southern Baptist, Assemblies of God, and other Christian churches, severing their decades-long relationships with the organization.

Fellow Eagle Scout Zach Wahls, whose pro-homosexual group Scouts for Equality has aggressively lobbied for complete access by homosexuals to the Boy Scouts, was vocally irritated by Gates’ acknowledgement that he was not ready to open the door to gay Scout leaders. “This is a copout,” Wahls complained, “and it tarnishes the legacy Mr. Gates has built as a leader who bridged cultural and political divides and led the military — and now the Boy Scouts — into the 21st century.”

Nonetheless, Gates’ admission has led some to speculate that his election may signal the BSA’s intention to completely dismantle the 100-plus year policies that were implemented to keep boys involved in Scouting safe from sexual predators and immoral influence.

[Baptist Press News](#) noted that Gates’ selection over AT&T chairman Randall Stephenson, who had been BSA’s president-elect the previous two years, was unexpected. Former BSA General Counsel Richard



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Matthews called the move unprecedented. Matthews, who is now general counsel for TrailLife USA, a Christian alternative to the Boy Scouts, noted that both Gates and Stephenson “have been outspoken about their belief that homosexuality should not bar participation or leadership roles in organizations.” However, he added, if the BSA has plans to segue into allowing homosexual Scout leaders, “there would be great value in having someone as its leader who has already supported and led such a change in the Department of Defense.”

As Defense Secretary in 2010, Gates was the lead man in helping move Congress toward its repeal later that year of the 1993 “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” ban on homosexual military personnel, [implementing Defense Department policy](#) that made it more difficult for military commanders to initiate investigations against personnel they suspected of homosexual misbehavior.

John Birch Society CEO Art Thompson noted that the BSA’s choice of Gates, a Council on Foreign Relations member with solid internationalist credentials, does not bode well for the organization that has helped to positively mentor and mold several generations of American men. “Mr. Gates has not only indicated that he would like to see the Boy Scouts incorporate the embrace of all who have a gay lifestyle,” said Thompson, “but based on his past experience, we shall see the Scouts becoming more internationalist in scope as opposed to a basic American outlook in the future. He will be the instrument to instill a ‘Common Core’ outlook to scouting.”



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