



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 25, 2013

Strong Reaction Follows Boy Scouts' Decision to Allow Homosexual Members

Following a [historic vote](#) by the leadership of  the Boys Scouts of America (BSA) to allow participation by boys who claim to be homosexual, both gay activist groups and conservative, pro-family organizations expressed disapproval of the Scouting program, but for very different reasons. Sixty-one percent of the roughly 1,400 voting members of the BSA's national council voted May 23 to allow boys who say they are homosexual to become members. The change will go into effect January 1, 2014.

In July of last year the BSA leadership concluded a two-year closed-door study by [re-affirming the group's ban on homosexual scout leaders](#), a policy that has been in place for the Boy Scouts' entire 103-year history. Homosexual activists responded by launching an aggressive campaign to force the BSA to change its policy, which has included convincing some of the BSA's large-scale [corporate donors](#) to drop their financial commitments to the group.

The BSA leadership emphasized that the ban against homosexual Scout leaders would remain in place. Tico Perez, commissioner of the BSA's National Council, told reporters that prohibition has "served us well for 100 years."

Response from homosexual spokespersons to the BSA policy change was lukewarm at best, with most noting the continued ban against homosexual leaders. "Today is a historic day for Boy Scouts across the country who want to be a part of this great American institution," said Chad Griffin of the homosexual activist group Human Rights Campaign. "But the new policy doesn't go far enough. Parents and adults of good moral character, regardless of sexual orientation, should be able to volunteer their time to mentor the next generation of Americans."

Zach Wahls, a former Eagle Scout, whose mother is a lesbian and who has taken a lead role in pressuring the BSA to cave in on its values, released a statement saying that the "Boy Scouts of America can do better. We welcome the news that the ban on gay Scouts is history, but our work isn't over until we honor the Scout Law by making this American institution open and affirming to all."

Wayne Brock, the BSA's chief executive, said the vote to allow gay teens as members represented a "challenging chapter in our history. While people have differing opinions on this policy, kids are better off when they're in Scouting."

In an official [statement](#) following the vote, the BSA said that regardless of the change to allow homosexual members, "any sexual conduct, whether heterosexual or homosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting," a statement apparently meant to re-enforce to program's commitment to moral purity on the part of participants. "Going forward," the statement continued, "our Scouting family will continue to focus on reaching and serving youth in order to help them grow into



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good, strong citizens. America's youth need Scouting, and by focusing on the goals that unite us, we can continue to accomplish incredible things for young people and the communities we serve."

Such rhetoric was insufficient for most conservative and Christian groups, many of which have supported and even sponsored Scouting programs over the years. Officials of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), which has been a stalwart supporter of Scouting and which had tried to convince the BSA to hold the line against tolerating homosexuality, expressed their deep disappointment in the decision.

SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page, one of the denomination's officials who had met with BSA officials, told [Baptist Press News](#) that he was "deeply saddened" that the BSA has abandoned its "constitutionally protected expressive message that homosexual behavior is incompatible with the principles enshrined in the [Scout Oath](#) and Scout Law." Page said the vote "ushers in a sea-change in the credibility of the Boy Scouts of America as a viable boys' organization for millions of Americans who believe strongly in the principles of biblical morality. To claim that the Boys Scouts is the nation's foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training suddenly rings hollow."

SBC President Fred Luter said the vote represented "a sad day in the history of an organization that for years stood on Christian principles," adding that his prayers would "go out to the parents and churches who have been forced to make decisions about being a part of the Boy Scouts organization. As Southern Baptists, our commitment to the Word of God and Christian values must take priority over what is 'politically correct.' "

Noted SBC ethicist Richard Land predicted that the many Southern Baptist churches which have sponsored scouting programs would look for alternatives. "Frankly, I can't imagine a Southern Baptist pastor who would continue to allow his church to sponsor a Boy Scout troop under these new rules," said Land. "I predict there will be a mass exodus of Southern Baptists and other conservative Christians from the Boy Scouts."

The Associated Press noted that the Assemblies of God, another denomination that has enjoyed a strong partnership with the Boy Scouts over the years, said that it could no longer support the BSA, and would encourage churches dropping Scouting programs to turn instead to the denomination's home-grown boys program, [Royal Rangers](#).

John Stemberger of [OnMyHonor.net](#) — a coalition of Boy Scouts, Eagle Scouts, Scouting leaders, and parents who had worked to convince BSA officials to hold true to Scouting's "timeless values" — expressed his group's "great sadness and deep disappointment" upon realizing that "the most influential youth program in America has turned a tragic corner." Stemberger predicted that the vote to allow homosexuality to gain a foothold in the Boy Scouts would "completely transform it into an unprincipled and risky proposition for parents. It is truly a sad day for Scouting."

Stemberger lamented that the Boy Scouts organizations "is embarking on a pathway of social experimentation that we believe will place at risk the very youth the organization is entrusted to serve, while rendering as hollow the tenets of the Scout Oath."

In a subsequent statement Stemberger announced that his group was joining with other like-minded groups and former BSA members for a closed-door meeting in June in Louisville, Kentucky, to discuss the creation of a new "character development" organization for boys. "We have a desire to explore how we might serve families and young people at the highest standard originally intended by Scouting's



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founder, Robert Baden-Powell," he said of the planned meeting.

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