



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 18, 2020

Decades of Sexual Abuse Catch Up to the Boy Scouts

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The effective end of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) as a positive influence in the lives of young men appears inevitable, as the 110-year-old organization filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection February 11 in the face of an overwhelming number of lawsuits filed by former Boy Scouts and their families claiming sexual abuse at the hands of predatory scout leaders.

“You’re talking about thousands of perpetrators,” estimated Michael Pfau, an attorney who has represented hundreds of victims of sexual abuse by scout leaders. “You’re talking about tens of thousands of victims. This will be the largest bankruptcy the country has ever seen, and likely one of the largest corporate bankruptcies.”

BSA executives insists that the bankruptcy filing is intended to pave the way for a fair compensation of the many victims impacted by abuse over the 60-plus years, while attempting to keep the non-profit operational in the future — a hope that seems in doubt with the organization’s dwindling numbers, along with its ill-advised decision in 2017 to change the name of the organization to simply Scouts, and to open the door to a co-ed scouting model.

As reported by [The New American](#) at that time, that move came on the heels of the BSA’s decision to open the door wide to homosexual leaders, as well as boys who claimed same-sex attraction. “While for over a century the Boy Scouts steadfastly maintained a policy against immoral behavior and lifestyles,” reported *The New American*, “in 2014 BSA officials announced that the organization would allow boys who self-identify as homosexual to join its ranks.”

Additionally, “while it had faced a high-profile scandal that revealed decades of the abuse of boys by scout leaders, in 2015 the organization announced that it would allow openly homosexual adults to serve as scout leaders.”

In spite of such conspicuous compromises that could conceivably place even more boys in danger of sexual abuse, Roger Mosby, president and chief executive officer of the BSA, insisted that he and other Boy Scout executives “are outraged that there have been times when individuals took advantage of our programs to harm innocent children.”

Mosby said that “the BSA cares deeply about all victims of abuse and sincerely apologizes to anyone who was harmed during their time in Scouting.” He added that “while we know nothing can undo the tragic abuse that victims suffered, we believe the Chapter 11 process ... will provide equitable compensation to all victims while maintaining the BSA’s important mission.”



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According to court papers, among the issues to be addressed in the bankruptcy are the fate of the BSA's assets, estimated at up to \$10 billion, how much the organization's insurance will kick in to compensate victims, and whether regional BSA councils across America will be required to relinquish assets to help pay compensation.

Paul Mones, an attorney for abuse victims, said that "there are a lot of very angry, resentful men out there who will not allow the Boy Scouts to get away without saying what all their assets are. They want no stone unturned."

In an [open letter](#) to Boy Scout abuse victims, Jim Turley, the BSA's national chairman, said that while the organization "cannot undo" the many years of abuse untold thousands of boys suffered at the hands of those they should have been able to trust, "we are committed to supporting you and to doing everything in our power to prevent it from happening to others. It is a social and moral responsibility that I and the entire organization take extremely seriously. We believe that all victims should receive our support and compensation — and we have taken decisive action to make that possible."

National Review noted that "in April 2019, it was revealed that the organization had kept files on sexual abusers in its ranks since the end of World War I. From 1944 there have been almost 8,000 perpetrators and over 12,000 victims the organization knew of, while the Boy Scouts said at the time that all known instances had been reported to the police."

[Trail Life USA](#), a Christian organization that thousands of families have turned to as a safe alternative to Boy Scouts, said it was saddened at the plight of the Boy Scouts organization. "In our opinion, the direction BSA has taken over the last five or six years seems to indicate they've blurred the lines of sexuality at a time when boys can have a lot of uncertainty and confusion in their lives," said the organization's CEO, Mark Hancock. He said that "boys especially need an environment that focuses on helping them become confident and stable young men. Without this solid foundation in their lives, boys are vulnerable to mental health issues, substance abuse, violence, and suicide."

Hancock said that in light of what has happened to the Boy Scouts, Trail Life USA wanted to reinforce its commitment "to providing a safe experience for all boys, from kindergarten through 12th grade. Our philosophy is derived from the Bible and set in the context of outdoor adventure. Boys are challenged to grow in character, understand their purpose, serve their community, and develop life-long leadership skills." He added that the group "has taken strong steps to ensure that the risk of abuse in our program is minimized. All our adult leaders undergo regular background checks, complete youth protection training, and adhere to strict guidelines designed to reduce the potential for abuse."

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