



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

## Christian, Pro-Family Voices Warn of Boy Scout Move to Allow Gay Leaders

Pro-family and religious leaders are strongly imploring leaders in the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) not to cave in on the organization's longtime policy banning homosexuals from serving as scout leaders. A BSA spokesman said that the move could come as early as the first week in February. "The policy change under discussion would allow the religious, civic, or educational organizations that oversee and deliver Scouting to determine how to address this issue," said BSA spokesman Deron Smith in a statement. He explained that the Boy Scouts "would not, under any circumstances, dictate a position to units, members, or parents. This would mean there would no longer be any national policy regarding sexual orientation, and the chartered organizations that oversee and deliver Scouting would accept membership and select leaders consistent with each organization's mission, principles, or religious beliefs."



If the change occurs, it would represent an about-face to the [BSA's decision last year](#) that, following a two-year study, it would continue with the ban on homosexual leaders that has been in place since the organization's founding in 1910. In explaining that 2012 decision, the BSA's chief executive officer, Bob Mazzuca, explained that the "vast majority of the parents of youth we serve value their rights to address issues of same-sex orientation within their family, with spiritual advisers, and at the appropriate time and in the right setting."

The shocking proposed policy change also comes following the release last year of [thousands of BSA files](#) from 1965 to 1985 that revealed the organization's unceasing battle to stop sexual predators from infiltrating the ranks of Scouting leadership in order to prey on boys.

The expected change to allow homosexuals is seen by many observers as a reaction to intense pressure that has been placed on the organization over the past several months, including the announcement by major donors UPS and Intel to pull their funding. Those companies succumbed to a pressure campaign led by former Eagle Scout Zach Wahls, founder of the pro-homosexual group Scouts for Equality. On his group's site Wahls applauded the BSA's proposed move as "an important step forward." But noting that the decision on whether or not to allow gay leaders will be left in the hands of state and local Scouting programs, he complained that "discrimination — whether it's at the national level or the local level — sends a harmful message to all youth, gay or not, and has no place in Scouting." He promised to mount a campaign to pressure individual BSA councils to drop their prohibition of homosexual leaders.



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Meanwhile, longtime members and supporters of the Boy Scouts noted that the organization's policy barring homosexuals has always been closely connected to its official [Boy Scout Oath](#), which requires that the conduct of the group's members — as well as its leaders — remain "morally straight." In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that the Boy Scouts of America was within its rights to maintain its proscription against homosexual Scout leaders. The High Court noted that enforcing traditional moral values was crucial to the organization's "expressive message," and to compel it to include homosexual leaders would violate its longtime values. Writing for the 5-4 majority in the case, Chief Justice William Rehnquist explained: "Forcing a group to accept certain members may impair the ability of the group to express those views and only those views, it intends to express."

The BSA announcement prompted strong criticism from religious and pro-family leaders, along with a challenge for Boy Scout officials to reconsider before implementing such a destructive policy change. "The Boy Scouts of America board would be making a serious mistake to bow to the strong-arm tactics of LGBT activists and open the organization to homosexuality," said Tony Perkins, president of the [Family Research Council](#). "The Boy Scouts have for decades been a force for moral integrity and leadership in the United States. Sadly, their principled stances have marked them as a target for harassment by homosexual activists and corporations such as UPS which are working to pressure the Boy Scouts into abandoning their historic values."

Perkins warned that if BSA officials capitulate to the demands of homosexual activists, the group's legacy as a mold of leaders and men of integrity "will become yet another casualty of moral compromise. The Boy Scouts should stand firm in their timeless values and respect the right of parents to discuss these sexual topics with their children."

Randy Sharp of the [American Family Association](#) noted that throughout its entire history the BSA "has had character and integrity and has stood firm on moral values. If they reverse this policy, then what they're saying is that to remain 'morally straight' isn't as important as they've been saying for the past 100 years." He predicted that the policy change would prompt many parents to pass on allowing their sons to join a Scouting program — which would also mean fewer trustworthy adult volunteers to help out in local troops. "You're signing a death warrant when you say you're going to allow open homosexuals to participate in a program with young boys," he said.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said the policy change would be "nothing less than disastrous for the Boy Scouts of America," adding that "this is going to raise a fundamental question for the Southern Baptist Convention at the national level and in the churches" with regard to the denomination's continued involvement with the Scouting program.

[Baptist Press News](#) quoted Frank Page, head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, as predicting that the move would be a "death blow" to the Scouting program. "I think this is a self-inflicted wound." Similarly, A.J. Smith, president of the [Association of Baptists for Scouting](#), said the majority of Baptist church leaders would see allowing homosexual Boy Scout leaders as an affront. "The goal or aim of Scouting is to instill in youth the ability to make moral and ethical decisions over a lifetime by a careful application of the Scout Oath and Law," he said. "However, this move appears to fly in the face of both the Scout Oath and Law."

Page said that in a meeting with Boy Scout officials, he warned that the expected move "would be a major blow to scouting in the future," adding that "they may gain a few people, but they're going to lose large numbers."

In an [op-ed published by USA Today](#), Robert Knight, an Eagle Scout and a Senior Fellow at the pro-family [American Civil Rights Union](#), wrote that "Scout leadership needs to stay true to its values and ignore corporate pressure from within and cultural pressure from without. The only way that will



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happen is if BSA board members get an earful from local Scout leaders and parents who won't let Boy Scouts walk away from its long-held principles."

Candi Cushman of [Focus on the Family](#) agreed, saying that the announcement represents "a crucial moment for the thousands of families and children who regard the Scouts as one of America's best traditions. Efforts to pressure the Scouts' traditional foundations are happening on our watch. So families and church leaders nationwide need to make their voices heard today to the organization's national leaders. Let them know that you deeply support their current policy and their ongoing efforts to keep their organization safe for children and based on strong moral foundations."

*Photo of Boy Scouts: AP Images*



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