



March 13, 2013

To: The Laurel Highlands Council Scouting Family

For the last two months, we have been engaged in dialogue relating to the membership standards within our organization. It has been our intention to gauge the sentiment of our Council for a *change vs. no change* in the membership policies of the Boy Scouts of America. To that end, we have taken several steps to determine the best course of action to understand the wishes of our chartered partners and our volunteers so that our voting members can represent the interests of our Scouts, Scouters, and the communities we serve. Through this process, we have heard strong opinions from those advocating change, and from those wishing to see the BSA maintain its current policy.

As I would expect from those in the Scouting family, the sentiments have been passionate, but the tone of the discussions has been civil. It is clear that the vast majority continue to agree that our programs are truly transformational for young people, and that we should remain unified as an organization to offer outstanding outdoor programs and to support our unit leaders as they work to build character and values for young people.

The National Council has suggested several approaches for Councils to gather information on the membership standards issue. We have considered these approaches and we have customized a plan that I think will work best for our Council. Here are the Action Steps we have taken in the Laurel Highlands Council:

- Following the February Executive Board business meeting, we held a 90 minute session on what has happened at the National level to prompt the current discussion. During that session, we held a facilitated open forum to determine the sentiment of the Board as to *change vs. no change* of the policy.
- A special e-mail box was created: [CouncilPresident@lhc-bsa.org](mailto:CouncilPresident@lhc-bsa.org) to allow chartered partners, parents, Scout leaders, and anyone with an opinion to express their views. This mailbox has been active, and I have read each e-mail. This method is giving me a very good insight as to the thoughts of our membership.
- The BSA is using the Voice of the Scout to acquire additional information.
- On February 19, Council Commissioner Rick Bausher and Mike Surbaugh met with the Council Commissioner Cabinet at their regularly scheduled meeting. District Commissioners were asked to seek feedback from their Commissioner staffs. At this meeting, all were encouraged to use the Council President's mailbox and actively seek opinion to help gauge our Council's sentiment.
- On March 1, I met with the professional staff so that they could give me directly the feedback they have heard as well as their own concerns and questions about the process and its impact on Scouting in the Laurel Highlands Council.
- At next week's Executive Committee meeting, the National material related to surveys of chartered partners will be reviewed again. We will identify any additional action steps that should be taken to best determine the sentiment of our Council related to this issue. This information will be used to help us assess the impact of any or no change and to report those findings to the Northeast Region.
- In the interim, we encourage you to share the e-mail address above with your chartered partner and all those within the Scouting family, so that their voices may be heard.

Mike Surbaugh and I have been very focused on this dialogue. We thank you for your continued support, and your ongoing leadership in Scouting. This has been and will continue to be an important conversation for all of us -- but together we must maintain focus on the most important work of Scouting - delivering on the promises of exciting programs and supporting our unit leaders as they help to develop the future leaders of our Nation.

Yours in Scouting,

Jim Crawford  
Laurel Highlands Council President

Prepared. For Life.™

