

# WAR ON BOY SCOUTS WILL CONTINUE

*The following article by Bill Donohue was recently published by Newsmax.*

On July 27, Dr. Robert M. Gates, president of the Boy Scouts of America, announced that the National Executive Board ratified a resolution ending the ban on openly gay adult leaders and employees. He admitted that the new policy was necessitated by "social, political, and legal changes," and that the "staggering cost" of more litigation was a major factor in the decision.

Will this ruling put an end to the lawsuits? Not a chance. Gay militants won't stop until the religious exemptions allowed under the new policy are stricken.

"Religious chartered organizations may continue to use religious beliefs as a criterion for selecting adult leaders, including in matters of sexuality," Gates said. That sounds great, but since 70 percent of Boy Scout chapters are run by religiously affiliated institutions, and the secular assault on religion is real, this issue is hardly over.

The Human Rights Campaign, the most aggressive gay group in the nation, wasted no time denouncing the religious exemption. Its president, Chad Griffin, was pleased with the new policy overall, but he still complained that "including an exemption for troops sponsored by religious organizations undermines and diminishes the historic nature of today's decision."

Mormons, Catholics, and Evangelicals have all questioned whether the exemptions are sufficient to ward off new attacks. Their concerns are valid.

In 1996, the Center for the Study of the Natural Law at The

Claremont Institute published the second edition of my monograph, "On the Front Line of the Culture War: Recent Attacks on the Boy Scouts of America." I detailed attempts by homosexuals, atheists, and feminists—gays, godless, and girls—to force the Boy Scouts to accept their constituents. Starting in 1980, they all sued, claiming discrimination, but no community succeeded more than gays. They seized on the Scout Oath as the basis of their objections.

The Scout Oath was first published in 1911. "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight." The term "morally straight" was read as a Christian obligation.

To be exact, the "Official Boy Scout Handbook" explained it by saying, "[w]hen you live up to the trust of fatherhood your sex life will fit into God's wonderful plan of creation. Fuller understanding of wholesome sex behavior can bring you lifelong happiness." If that sounds antiquated, it is.

To be "morally straight" now reads, "[to] be a person of strong character, your relationships with others should be honest and open. You should respect and defend the rights of all people. Be clean in your speech and actions, and remain faithful in your religious beliefs. The values you practice as a Scout will help you shape a life of virtue and self-reliance."

"Fatherhood." "God's wonderful plan of creation." "Wholesome sex behavior." These verities have all been junked; in their place are platitudes about cleanliness. This is more than a bow to gays—it is a wholesale dismantling of the founding principles of the Boy Scouts.

Changes in the Handbook will not stave off new lawsuits. That's because the widespread belief that sexual orientation

is analogous to race and ethnicity has created mass confusion. But to compare the exclusion of African Americans from leadership positions in the Boy Scouts to the exclusion of homosexuals is illogical.

Those who object to African Americans as troop leaders may not rationally assert that what they object to is related to character or behavior. The opposite is true of gays. To speak about homosexuals without addressing sodomy, which is what homosexuals do, is as irrational as talking about vegetarians without discussing vegetables, which is what vegetarians eat.

Having gay kids belong to the Boy Scouts is not an issue for most Mormons, Catholics, or Evangelicals. At issue is the propriety of having gay Scout leaders interact with boys in settings that are potentially problematic. To be sure, it would be just as worrisome to have heterosexual men interacting with girls in settings that are potentially problematic. The difference is that Boy Scout policies make the latter concern moot.

Contrary to conventional elite opinion, sexuality is not analogous to ascribed demographic characteristics. Americans of faith know this to be true, especially parents. Now if only our judges acknowledged this verity, religious exemptions would be insulated from secular assault.