

Pete Hegseth - Scouting America and Pentagon MoU Statement

For more than a century, Boy Scouts of America prepared over 130 million American boys to make moral and ethical choices—not just during their formative years, but for a lifetime as they grew into men. The first few words of the Scout Oath exemplify this:

“On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country.”

The Boy Scouts are embedded in our communities. They’re sponsored by community organizations, service clubs, and churches. Many Boy Scouts have gone on to senior leadership positions in their communities, in business, in our nation’s military, and as elected representatives in local, state, and national office. Six Boy Scouts have been elected President of the United States.

Eleven of the twelve men to walk on the moon? Boy Scouts.

Boy Scout training focused on responsible citizenship, character and leadership development, patriotism, personal fitness, self-reliance, faith, and a wide range of outdoor skills. It was a great program, and the department—this department—had a close relationship with the Scouts almost since its inception, as many troops meet on military bases.

After 2012, however, the Boy Scouts lost their way, and a once-great organization became gravely wounded. Diversity, equity, and inclusion—DEI—crept in. The name was changed to Scouting America. Girls were accepted. The focus on God as the ruler of the universe was watered down to include openness to humanism and earth-centered pagan religions. Scouting became an organization that no longer supported and celebrated boys.

They even welcomed the destructive myth of gender fluidity and transgenderism to infiltrate their membership. Along the way, standards were lowered and merit destroyed in favor of an insidious, radical, woke ideology that is anti-America and anti-American.

The result? Membership cratered.

Americans didn’t want this. In 1970, 10 million boys participated in Boy Scouts. Currently, fewer than 1 million boys and girls participate.

Further, many of the community organizations that once supported Scout troops withdrew their support. Scouting America, the parent organization, filed for bankruptcy protection. The changes Scouting America made since 2012 have also jeopardized the relationship with this department.

I was very seriously considering ending our support of Scouting altogether. We have a department to protect, after all. Beyond that, the policies Scouting America has in place violate President Trump’s Executive Order 14173, entitled Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity.

Before making this big change, I decided to meet with the current Scouting leadership to convey our deep concerns. Based on that face-to-face conversation and subsequent discussions, Scouting America agreed to make several key reforms. Let me briefly highlight a few of them.

First, Scouting America has agreed to comply immediately with the provisions of Executive Order 14173. This includes reviewing and replacing politicized, divisive, and discriminatory language throughout the organization, its programs, and all publications. No more DEI. Zero.

Second, the “Citizenship in Society” Merit Badge—which encouraged Scouts to explore diversity, equity, inclusion, and identity, and then asked them to engage in activism on those topics—has been discontinued.

Third, Scouting America will modify its policy to make clear that membership will be based solely on biological sex at birth and not gender identity. Applications will include only two sex designations—male and female—and must match the applicant’s birth certificate. Biological boys and girls will not be allowed to occupy or share intimate spaces together (toilets, showers, tents, etc.).

Fourth, Scouting America will honor those who serve by waiving registration fees for children of active duty, Guard, and Reserve families.

Fifth, in partnership with the War Department, Scouting America will introduce a new military service merit badge.

These and other changes committed to by Scouting America’s leadership will hopefully result in a rededication to the foundational ideals that have defined Scouting for generations: duty to God and country, leadership, character, and service.

However, as President Reagan famously said:

“Trust, but verify.”

This agreement is new, and the Department’s support for Scouting America is contingent on substantial progress toward these reforms over the next six months. At that time, we will vigorously review their progress and decide whether to continue our support. The onus is squarely on Scouting America to deliver.

If we are unsatisfied with their progress and commitment to the agreed-upon reforms, we will find them in violation of the President’s executive order and cease our support. We hope that doesn’t happen—but it could.

Ideally, I believe the Boy Scouts should go back to being the Boy Scouts as originally founded: a group that develops boys into men.

There are also additional youth and boys’ organizations—such as Trail Life USA and Awana Clubs—that are already compliant with President Trump’s executive order and that the Department may eventually support as well.

We’re watching. We’re watching closely.

We look forward to providing updates after our six-month review and wish the best to Scouting America.