

SCOUTS-L

PTA

From <@pucc.PRINCETON.EDU:owner-scouts-l@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU> **Wed Nov 27 15:58:38 1996**
Return-Path: <@pucc.PRINCETON.EDU:owner-scouts-l@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>
Received: from pucc.PRINCETON.EDU (smtp@pucc.Princeton.EDU [128.112.129.99]) by cap1.CapAccess.org (8.6.12/8.6.10) with SMTP id PAA12164; **Wed, 27 Nov 1996 15:58:38 -0500**
Received: from PUCC.PRINCETON.EDU by pucc.PRINCETON.EDU (IBM VM SMTP V2R2)
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Received: from TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU (NJE origin LISTSERV@TCUBVM) by TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU (LMail V1.2a/1.8a) with BSMTP id 3909; **Wed, 27 Nov 1996 14:47:18 -0600**
Received: from TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU by TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU (LISTSERV release 1.8b)
 with NJE id 3903 for SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU; **Wed, 27 Nov 1996 14:46:15 -0600**
Received: from TCUBVM (NJE origin SMTP@TCUBVM) by TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU (LMail V1.2a/1.8a) with BSMTP id 3902; **Wed, 27 Nov 1996 14:46:13 -0600**
Received: from emout04.mail.aol.com by tcubvm.is.tcu.edu (IBM VM SMTP V2R2)
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Received: by emout04.mail.aol.com (8.6.12/8.6.12) id PAA03096; **Wed, 27 Nov 1996 15:45:48 -0500**
Message-ID: <961127154546_232175131@emout04.mail.aol.com>
Date: **Wed, 27 Nov 1996 15:45:48 -0500**
Reply-To: EDarr1776@AOL.COM
Sender: Scouts-L Youth Group List <Scouts-L@tcu.edu>
From: Ed Darrell <EDarr1776@AOL.COM>
Subject: **Re: PTA and recharter**
X-To:
GALIPP_DON/DAL10_DRGALIPP//US/MOBIL/BB2@dal.mobil.com
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>
Status: RO
X-Status:

Bob Taylor in Poulsbo, Washington, wondered about the phenomenon of PTAs dropping charters for Scout organizations.

This is an issue of misunderstanding. Please spread the good words.

First, you may want to check archives of this list to find other similar threads. I raised the issue about a year ago when our Cub Pack was dropped, and at least one other significant thread popped up since January.

Second, it is important that we protest such actions to the local boards of the PTAs. They make the decisions, NOT the national PTA.

Third, the justification suggested from the national PTA is that local PTAs may assume some liability for leaders who abuse kids. Without dealing with the liability issue for a moment, isn't it about time we stood up to such scare mongering, and pointed out that what we lose in youth programs is of much greater value than any sense of "not being sued" we could ever get? These are the parents of the kids, sponsoring another organization of mostly parents who get training to prevent child abuse. It is gut level dumb to think that a PTA's dropping sponsorship does the kids any good, and we shouldn't let our local PTAs fall into such a trap.

JUST THE FACTS: The facts are that in 1989 (or thereabouts -- I've not pulled out my file) the National PTA got concerned (I'm not sure why), and got an "insurance specialist" to review the BSA's insurance policy. The expert said that the policy does not protect a sponsoring organization for "intentional" acts, and since child abuse is an intentional act (in most cases), he said COs could be hung out to dry if there were a suit. Since the national PTA organization does not cover local organizations, and since most local organizations carry no separate insurance (according to this guy), PTA board members would personally be the targets of such suits.

BSA protested to the PTA, and made some of the modifications in insurance suggested by the PTA's expert. PTA refused to change its recommendation in 1989. I have found several PTAs relying on notices from their state

organizations dated 1989 to drop sponsorship.

PTA issued a softer letter in 1990 or 1991, as I recall, but I have not found a local organization that has that letter. I got it from the national PTA.

You might want to check to be sure your local chapter is working from 1996

documents, just in case there's been a more recent softening of the policy.

However, I think the original PTA policy is off the mark. PTA's concern is that the CO's "selection of leaders" of the Scout unit will confer liability.

National PTA asked that the National BSA sign off on local leaders, on the line of the volunteer application where the COR signs now.

Understandably,

BSA refused that request, and everybody's heels dug in. I suggested to our council's chief executive that someone reopen discussions with national PTA,

it has not happened to my knowledge.

I chased down the PTA policy with the Texas PTA, PTA's lobbyist in Washington

and their national counsel in Chicago. From the materials they sent me, it appears to me that their expert thought local councils each to be separate corporations not functioning under a federal charter, and he based his recommendations on what he would tell franchisees of a national chain.

On

specific points I don't think the analysis works, but I was unable to make headway with the PTA people I spoke to. ("Federal charter? What's that?

I've never heard of such a thing." I spent some years working on the Senate

staff, occasionally with charters. The people I spoke to at PTA didn't know how such things work.) They do not see the analogy or parallels between the

national charters of the American Red Cross, to pick one example, and the Boy

Scouts of America. Alas.

But I will tell you that the material from national PTA makes it clear that the sponsorship decision is made at the local level. For our Pack, the decision was made in executive board on the basis of the "suggestion" alone,

and ratified by the membership with what I considered to be inadequate discussion. The board took great offense that I questioned their actions and

refused to reconsider. Four local organizations volunteered to step in at recharter time and we didn't push the issue any further. I wish I had known about the issue 60 days earlier.

TO STOP PTAs FROM DROPPING UNITS:

- 1. Be nice to the PTA. Smile a lot. Don't call them idiots. They are trying to be responsible.**
- 2. Join the PTA, write a letter to the local president saying you want the PTA to sponsor Scouting. Get other parents in your Pack or Troop to do the same. These organizations are quite democratic.**
- 3. Ask for assistance from your district executive, and get what you need to understand the issues. If the DE can help, get her/him in front of your PTA board to explain, early.**
- 4. Inform yourself to be expert on the issue. Get all the information you can on BSA's insurance coverage, including a copy of the signup stuff. There was a videotape out from national in 1994 discussing the issue. I understand it's very informative, though I've not seen it myself. Be able to explain BSA's "two deep" leadership policies. Be sure you practice two deep.**
Get a copy of the PTA "suggestion." Get what you can from BSA. Get a trainer for the child abuse prevention course to give a presentation to the PTA board. Remember to remind them that this training goes away as a protection during a lawsuit when sponsorship ties are cut. (It is a defense that you did what was possible to prevent abuse, even if your prevention efforts were ultimately unsuccessful.) Frankly, having more parents trained to prevent child abuse should be quite a help.
- 5. IF the PTA moves to drop sponsorship, get your committee and all the parents to attend the board meeting to urge the PTA to support developing good citizens from kids. IF it goes to the full PTA, show up in force, speak against the idea and vote it down. In an age when some schools feel they need metal detectors to prevent weapons from getting in the door, it ill**

behooves a parent group to kick out a group of Cub Scouts when the mission is to eliminate the need for the metal detector, no?

6. IF the PTA drops sponsorship, consider your alternatives. The school itself can assume sponsorship. Many local organizations will jump at the chance -- check with your local Rotary Club, Lions Club, JayCees, Chamber of Commerce, and local churches. Many packs and troops are chartered to a "Concerned Parents" organization, which is often just the parents of the kids.

Child abuse is real, and it's a lot more prevalent than we'd like to think. The existence of Scouting fights against it. The methods and practices of Scouting fight against it. Let's stop doing the wrong things for the right reasons. PTAs who drop sponsorship of Scouting do not advance the cause of preventing child abuse.

Ed Darrell, Duncanville, Texas

[I apologize for the length.]