

Situation:

Donald Trump's Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, is threatening to sever the century-old partnership between the U.S. military and Scouting America, formerly known as Boy Scouts.

In a draft memo to Congress, reviewed by NPR, Hegseth says the group is no longer a meritocracy and has become an organization designed to **"attack boy-friendly spaces."** He criticizes Scouting for being **"genderless"** and for **promoting diversity, equity and inclusion.**

Background:

The military has provided support to the Scouts for more than 100 years, and the highly motivated and civic-minded scouts have been an integral part of military recruiting efforts. Up to a third of the Navy's officers in training have some scouting background. Up to 20 percent of cadets and midshipmen at the service academies are Eagle Scouts. The presence of Scouts on military bases around the world has been a source of grounding for military families who move frequently. Enlistees who've earned Eagle get advanced military rank and better pay. **This relationship has been of great mutual benefit.**

The Reality:

All who are familiar with the Scouts know that promotion through the ranks is strictly earned through **merit-based** achievements. We also know that the Scouts' purpose is to inculcate skills, behaviors, and character traits that are elucidated in the Scout Oath, Scout Law, and Scout Mission (see below). **Scouting America has not wavered from its purpose** of instilling these laudable character traits and behaviors in their boys and girls. To label these traits as masculine or feminine is itself an application of gender ideology. When we eliminate equal opportunities for all to thrive and to compete for recruitment and promotion, we waste tremendous human potential. When we fail to account for diversity, equity and inclusion in our policies, we in fact, eliminate a merit-based system.

Risks of Autocratic Takeover:

The world-renowned scholar of autocratic regimes, Timothy Snyder, wrote the acclaimed book, On Tyranny- Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century. Lesson 2 is "Defend Institutions". In this chapter, he writes, **"It is institutions that help us preserve democracy... Institutions do not protect themselves. They fall one after the other unless each is defended from the beginning."**

Historically, when democratic institutions fall under a fascist regime, they are replaced by fascist institutions. We cannot risk having the government replace Scouting America with training grounds that inculcate our youth with fascist ideology. This is precisely what happened under the Nazis and the Eastern Bloc Communists.

In response to the regressive draft memo from the Pentagon which criticizes Scouting America for stoking “gender confusion” and incorporating DEI policies, Scouting America released a statement saying the organization is proud of its long affiliation with the military and will work to continue it.

Scouting America Must demonstrate Integrity and Bravery:

We, as American patriots, respect Scouting America for adapting over time to create a more equitable organization that serves our youth and our society well. Therefore, we implore the Scouting America leadership to **model the integrity and bravery they wish to inculcate in our youth** by not complying with demands from the military or federal government. We trust that Scouting America will not compromise its mission, its core values, and its commitment to providing opportunities for growth and development for all demographic groups. Scouting America must maintain its commitment to the betterment of our country and our citizens, and that requires rejecting racism and sexism and embracing inclusion.

Scouting America’s Sustainability:

Maintaining the integrity of its mission could also require rejecting support from the military. Given the millions of Scouting alumni, family members of Scouts, Scouting volunteers, and long list of highly accomplished former Scouts including astronauts, Nobel Prize winners, Pulitzer Prize winners, civil rights leaders, business leaders, authors and journalists, ground-breaking scientists, military leaders and war heroes, professional athletes and coaches, actors and entertainers, politicians and civil servants, Scouting America should be **able to function and thrive independently of the U.S. Military, if necessary.**

Follow this Example of Courage and Strength:

Follow the courageous example of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG):

ACOG was the first nationwide physician organization to cut ties with the Trump administration since Trump enacted his [large-scale campaign](#) to slash all federal initiatives for diversity, equity and inclusion. ACOG states on its website that diversity, equity and inclusion are part of the group’s [core values](#), which are integral to combating racism and oppression in medical care.

“After careful deliberation, ACOG has made an organization-wide decision to stop accepting federal funding for all ACOG programs and activities for current contracts,” ACOG said in a statement to HuffPost. “Recent changes in federal funding laws and regulations significantly impact ACOG’s program goals, policy positions, and ability to provide timely and evidence-based guidance and recommendations for care.”

ACOG needs funding to do life-saving research. If ACOG can choose integrity over capitulation, then Scouting America can too.

The Foundation of Scouting

Scout Oath: 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.

Scout Law: A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

Scout Mission: The mission of Scouting America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Sources:

- <https://www.scouting.org/about/>
- <https://www.npr.org/2025/11/25/nx-s1-5615164/pentagon-scouting-hegseth-cut-ties>
- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/obgyns-trump-federal-funding_n_688d179be4b00b7bc191be83
- <https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2025/02/05/famous-former-scouts/#:~:text=There%20are%20many%20famous%20people%20who%20have.Arthur%20Eldred%2C%20Charles%20McGee%2C%20and%20Thomas%20Norris>