

## QUESTIONS POSED IN RECENT MEDIA STORIES

### **Who is calling the shots over at Girl Scouts?**

Our girls and their parents are calling the shots. It's been that way for 100 years and will remain that way in our next 100 years. Girl Scouts is a volunteer-led and governed organization focused on delivering a leadership program designed to give our girls the skills they need to lead productive lives. Our recent program changes were based on input from 4,500 girls and volunteers during informal discussion forums. Our programming model has been designed to allow our volunteers, most of whom are the parents of our girls, to have total control of what topics they choose to cover. We are a consensus-driven organization comprised of more than three million Americans from all walks of life, ethnic backgrounds, and religious beliefs focused on making our world a better place.

### **Where is the organization headed?**

Girl Scouts has always been and will always be an organization that has a spiritual motivating force and that serves girls from all walks of life. Our mission is to create leaders by providing girls with the courage, confidence, and character they need to make a difference in our world. Girl Scouts has been working side by side with the Catholic community since 1914 when Cardinal Gibbons formally endorsed the work of Girl Scouts and the Catholic Church, and we hope that our partnership will endure for centuries to come. We believe that the [Girl Scout Promise and Girl Scout Law](#) clearly define what this Movement is all about today and what it will represent tomorrow.

### **Does the Girl Scouts have a “left” leaning agenda?**

The Girl Scouts' agenda is to provide girls with the courage, confidence, and character they need to make this world a better place. While that does include vocal support for girls who wish to pursue careers, we can't stress loudly enough that the magic of Girl Scouts is that it is a grassroots volunteer organization that is run mostly by parents in each community. The local volunteers, many in Catholic Churches across the country, control what programming the girls receive. Parents, many of whom serve as troop volunteers, are actively engaged in those activities and well aware of what their girls are doing. The notion that a small band of individuals from a faraway place “control” everything the girls see and do is simply fantasy.

Girl Scouts has always been and will always be an inclusive organization. When our founder Juliette Gordon Low assembled the first 18 Girl Scouts in Savannah, Georgia, the group included not just girls from that Southern town's prominent families, but also girls recruited from the orphan asylum and the local synagogue. During WWII, Girl Scouts served Japanese-American girls in internment camps, and in the 60s, Dr. Martin Luther King praised Girl Scouts as a force for desegregation. Girl Scouts has always blazed new trails with the purpose of making our world a better place to live. We are proud of our non-discrimination heritage and policies within our councils. We are an organization of 3.2 million Americans. Do we have members who lean to the left? The answer is yes. But we also have members that lean far to the right and from our perspective—all are welcome.

### **Does Girl Scouts' inclusion of transgender children put other children at risk?**

Our position on transgender children is very straightforward. If we are approached by a family of a transgender child, that case is handled on a case-by-case basis with the welfare and best interests of the child AND the members of the troop in question a top priority. If we felt other members of the troop were at risk, we would seek another solution. We have found no evidence to support the claim that associating with transgender children poses a developmental risk to other children. The Girl Scouts strive to provide girls with a safe environment where they can develop their own skills of leadership. We believe these children deserve the opportunity to interact with other children their age, and to develop the skills and talents needed to lead productive lives. Girl Scouts is willing to take on that challenge for the sake of the child.

### **Is Girl Scouts pro-abortion?**

Girl Scouts has been very clear on this point. Girl Scouts takes no position on abortion or birth control. We believe these subjects are best addressed by girls and their parents, which is consistent with our letter of understanding with the Catholic Church.

### **Is Girl Scouts anti-pro-life?**

Girl Scouts has neither a “pro-life” badge nor a “pro-choice” badge. As we’ve discussed, a Catholic Girl Scout who wishes to explore her pro-life views can do so by discovering how her faith interprets the Girl Scout Law to support those views when she earns her My Promise, My Faith pin. Our request of the girls would be that if they choose to pursue this topic, they do so with their parents’ involvement. As we have stated previously, we prefer that these discussions take place within a girl’s family, including her faith family.

Regarding the women Girl Scouts chooses to highlight, we don’t discriminate. As a leadership organization, we believe it is entirely appropriate, for example, to cite the first woman appointed to the U.S. Cabinet—assertions by critics that that she “allegedly had [*sic*] lesbian relationship” do not diminish the leadership she demonstrated and the breakthrough she made when she was appointed to the Cabinet. The women featured in our program resources are meant to inspire girls from all walks of life, and we’re open to suggestions for future editions of our materials. Better still, introduce girls to women from your community whom you want girls to look up to! Their stories are the ones girls will really remember!

### **Does Girl Scouts pressure employees to muzzle their pro-life views?**

Absolutely not, but some councils do have dress codes that prohibit their employees from wearing clothing that endorses political parties, commercial products, or sensitive issues at work or during official Girl Scout activities. Girl Scouts takes a neutral position on this topic and does not feel it is appropriate for a member of our team to wear clothing that advocates one side or the other given the sensitive nature of the issue. When the young lady in question came to work in clothing that violated that dress code, she was respectfully asked to either put on a Girl Scout shirt, turn her shirt inside out, or to go home and change into appropriate clothing. She chose to go home.

### **Does Girl Scouts strive to produce “offensive materials” for its members?**

The obvious response to that question is no. From time to time our members have pointed out concerns they have about materials and we do our best to address those concerns. When critics recently pointed out issues regarding a link in our materials to Media Matters, we immediately began the process of reprinting the books without the reference to Media Matters. We acted months before the topic became headline news. The reprints are in the process of being distributed at this moment. We are currently reviewing all of our materials to address many of the issues recently raised by concerned parents.

We are often criticized by these individuals for the women we choose to highlight in our materials. Our Journeys materials feature women who have worked in their respective fields to make a difference in the world. We have tried to identify individuals from many walks of life, of all ages and origins, who have become leaders in their respective areas of expertise. They have chosen to take a leadership position on an issue or topic where they have great passion. While we may not agree with the opinion of everyone featured, we hope we can all agree that they embody the commitment to leadership that we strive to teach our girls.

### **Does Girl Scouts prohibit pro-life advocacy?**

Girl Scouts’ position on this topic is quite clear. Girl Scouts does not take a position on abortion or birth control. We believe those issues are best discussed between the parents and their child.

Many of our girls participate in Girl Scout programs conducted within their Catholic Churches and advocate for their faith on a regular basis.

### **Is Girl Scouts about building character or “creating advocates of a liberal agenda?”**

We believe strongly that all across this country, within Catholic schools and synagogues, rich communities and poor, our staff, volunteers, and parents are doing their very best to provide a Girl Scout program that is focused on teaching girls how to live by the Girl Scout Law which states:

*I will do my best to be*  
honest and fair,  
friendly and helpful,  
considerate and caring,  
courageous and strong, and  
responsible for what I say and do,  
*and to*  
respect myself and others,  
respect authority,  
use resources wisely,  
make the world a better place, and  
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

We support girls of all faiths in the ways they and their families choose to live the Law—as Democrats or Republicans, business leaders or government leaders, community leaders or family leaders. We believe that whether she one day sits in the boardroom or the baby's room, every girl can use her leadership skills to make our world a better place to live.

**Does Girl Scouts wish to continue to partner with the Catholic Church?**

**Absolutely yes.** Our partnership (1914) is nearly as old as the Girl Scouts. For nearly 100 years we have reached millions of girls in Catholic schools and churches, changing lives in so many ways. Today's girls face very difficult challenges in our society, and we believe strongly that they will need guidance from values-based organizations like the Catholic Church and Girl Scouts. If members of the Catholic Church are concerned about what our girls are exposed to, we ask them to join our ranks and help our girls develop strong decision-making skills. Those volunteers will guide the girls through the leadership experience. Today we have more girls to serve than volunteers to serve them, and we need your help to reach even more girls. While we may not agree on every topic, we do know that working together, we can empower our girls across the country to help change the world. We've demonstrated that for nearly 100 years, and we want to continue that work in our next century together.