

The Michigan Daily



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FROM THE DAILY

Scout's hypocrisy

Boy Scouts should end anti-gay policies organization-wide

On Monday, the Boy Scouts of America, one of the largest youth groups in the United States, announced that it may end its long-standing ban of homosexuals from its organization. The BSA's traditional position on denying membership to gay people and atheists was supported by a 2000 U.S. Supreme Court case that ruled in favor of the discretionary, discriminatory practices. However, the policy being considered would allow local scouting groups to determine their own policies regarding openly gay people. A change in policy is overdue and should be organization-wide, not left to individual prejudices.

First formed in 1910 to prepare young boys to become "ethical and moral" men by instilling virtues including trust, kindness and bravery, BSA can be thought of as exemplifying what it means to work with others. Each scout must swear an oath that states they will "help other people at all times" as a duty to one's "God and country." An interpretation of this standard has typically been the used as reason for the exclusion of homosexuals, atheists and agnostics. Several civil cases have been brought against BSA in many states including California, Illinois, Kansas and Michigan. Many teenage members, who have come to terms with their sexuality during their tenure with the BSA, have found themselves ineligible for honors, removed from their troops and banned outright. Countless gay adults have also been barred from being troop leaders and in other capacities.

It tells the youth involved that there are numbers among their ranks that are ethically inferior and morally incapable of performing the duties of a scout. The BSA has cited its religious affiliation as its reason for discrimi-

natory practices but this is counter to the values we should instill in our youth.

It should not be the business of an organization, let alone one whose duty it is to teach children and teenagers "patriotism, courage, self-reliance and kindred virtues," to promote exclusion. As a Title 36 "patriotic" organization under federal law, BSA's position on anti-gay discrimination has lagged behind others. Big Brother, Big Sisters of America, for instance, has been actively supporting openly LGBTQ volunteers for over a decade. Similar organizations such as 4-H and the Girl Scouts also openly support all members regardless of sexual orientation.

However, given the reluctance of much of the country to adopt homosexual-accepting policies until recently, BSA isn't solely to blame. With each passing generation, with each passing year, Americans are becoming more tolerant and accepting of others. We can only hope to be morally righteous when we are morally right. The Boy Scouts should push forward this progressive policy and better their organization.

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