



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

BALTIMORE AREA COUNCIL

Dear Scouting Parents and Leaders,

In late September, the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America notified our office of a pending membership fee increase to take effect on January 1, 2020. While costs to the organization have increased every year, the Boy Scouts of America have subsidized fees, such as liability insurance, which covers all official Scouting activities. However, due to rising costs, it is no longer possible to continue to subsidize these expenses. To ensure we have the resources to fulfill the promise of Scouting despite increasing operating costs, the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America has decided to increase the annual membership fee effective January 1, 2020, to:

- \$60 for youth members in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts,
- \$36 for youth members in Exploring, and
- \$36 for adult members

The Baltimore Area Council, serving more than 25,000 youth in 5 counties and Baltimore City, recognizes that this announcement comes at a critical time during our membership renewal period. Locally, we have decided not to increase the additional \$4.00 accident and illness insurance fee included in your total membership fee. This decision was made to help mitigate your expenses. Also, we have summarized (below) the services available to you to help you counterbalance the fee increase.

1. Unit Popcorn Sale
2. Unit Camp Card Sale
3. Local Unit Fundraisers (car washes, spaghetti dinner, etc.)
4. Charter Partner Assistance

Every dollar of the national membership fee pays for essential services, including liability insurance for those participating in approved Scouting activities, program resources, safety standards, youth protection and personal safety training, and services to councils nationwide to sustain Scouting. The National organization will also continue to develop and improve resources that support our volunteers and youth members such as online registration, Member Care and Scoutbook, which now includes the Den Leader experience to ensure the safe and consistent delivery of Cub Scouting; as well as improvements aimed at simplifying the annual renewal process.

Additionally, the National Service Center:

- Provides training to local council volunteers and staff
- Maintains a national training center at Philmont Scout Ranch
- Develops and maintains four year-round national high-adventure bases and executes national events (jamborees, National Eagle Scout Association and Order of the Arrow conferences, and National Council meetings)
- Continues our leadership role in protecting our youth by providing Youth Protection resources, training, and criminal background checks for all registered volunteers and staff

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- Provides local councils with program as well as tools for camp and office planning and evaluation, extensive financial counseling, planned giving and fundraising information, and professional personnel support
- Coordinates a communications network through printed literature (handbooks, merit badge pamphlets, brochures, training materials, and professional development training)
- Makes available uniforms, equipment and program supplies
- Maintains and develops new relationships with chartered organizations that use the Scouting program (religious institutions, civic organizations, labor unions, professional organizations, business and industry)
- Serves in a leadership role with Scouting associations in other countries as a member of the World Scout Conference
- Sets and maintains program standards (e.g., advancement, health and safety, etc.) to ensure consistency of the brand throughout councils across the country

Scouting remains one of the most valuable investments we can make in our youth and community because Scouting builds tomorrow's leaders. Scouting offers once-in-a-lifetime adventures, merit badges that spark interests and future careers, campouts under the stars, and service projects that leave a lasting impact on our communities. These character-building skills provide young people with a safe and welcoming place to learn, grow, and thrive.

We are committed to ensuring that all youth can experience the character-building benefits of Scouting regardless of their financial situation. In addition to our existing council and unit membership assistance, we have established a national *Growing Future Leaders Fund*, which is funded entirely through donations, to provide additional financial support to those who need it.

Scouting's success depends on our ability to stay relevant by adjusting to change and implementing new ideas and programs. Thank you for your continued role in empowering a generation of future leaders of character through Scouting programs.

Please contact the Baltimore Area Council if you have questions at scouting@baltimorebsa.org.

Yours in Scouting,

Brian Steger
Scout Executive & CEO
Baltimore Area Council; Boy Scouts of America

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FAQ

Q: Why are the fees increasing now?

A: While costs increase every year, the Boy Scouts of America has worked to keep the annual membership fee as low as possible to make Scouting available to as many young people as possible by subsidizing core costs, including liability insurance we must carry to cover all official Scouting activities. As the organization's financial situation has shifted over the past several months, it is no longer possible to subsidize at the level we have in the past, especially as the cost of insurance has increased dramatically.

Q: Does this apply to youth members and volunteers?

A: Yes, the new fees apply for youth and adult members. Effective January 1, 2020, the new fees are:

- \$60 for youth members in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts,
- \$36 for youth members in Exploring, and
- \$36 for adult members (includes cost of background check and *Scouting Magazine*)
- \$60 for unit charter fees

Q: Is Scouting still a good value?

A: Absolutely! While most extracurricular activities are seasonal, Scouting is a year-round program that remains one of the most valuable investments we can make to support young men and women today so they can become the leaders we will turn to tomorrow. For most of our youth members, the new registration fee amounts to \$5 a month, which is an enormous value when you consider that many seasonal extracurricular activities often start at \$100 for programs that last a few weeks.

Q: Does the fee increase apply to council-paid memberships?

A: No. The cost for council-paid membership, sometimes known as ScoutReach, will continue to be \$24 for each youth member.

Q: What will the money be used for?

A: Every dollar of membership fees will go to cover the cost of essential services, including liability insurance for members participating in approved Scouting activities, background checks for adult leaders, program development and training resources, continuously updated youth protection and youth safety training, improved IT/digital experiences and services to our councils nationwide.

Q: Is this increase being implemented to cover the cost of the additional background checks?

A: No, the cost of background checks is not the prompting the fee increase.

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Q: Why is this being announced now?

A: We recognize the timing of this fee increase creates challenges as units have already begun collecting fees for their 2020 registration renewal process, and we would not make this difficult decision if it were not absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, the cost of liability insurance we must carry to cover all Scouting activities has increased dramatically over the past several months, and the organization is no longer able to offset the cost of insurance. We are committed to supporting you through this process and are making necessary adjustments to the online rechartering system to ensure units can carry out the recharter process.

Q: Does this increase cover financial challenges the organization is facing?

A: The increase was prompted because the cost of liability insurance we must carry to cover all Scouting activities has increased dramatically over the past several months, and the organization is no longer able to offset the cost of insurance. The national membership fee also enables us program development and training resources, continuously updated youth protection and youth safety training, improved IT/digital experiences and services to our councils nationwide.

Q: When will this increase take effect?

A: The new membership fees will take effect starting January 1, 2020 for the 2020-21 program year.

Q: Is financial assistance available?

A: We are committed to ensuring that all youth can experience the character-building benefits of Scouting regardless of their financial situation. In addition to the many existing council and unit membership assistance funds, we have established the donor-funded *Growing Future Leaders Fund* to provide financial support to those who need it.

Q: My council recently announced a new fee to cover insurance. Does this change mean that fee is no longer necessary?

A: No, the liability insurance that we need to carry for all Scouting activities at the national level is different from local fees that are collected to address local needs, which can include such as local property and accident insurance, as well as unique local programming costs.

Q: In addition to the national membership fee, my council is implementing a program fee. Is that allowed?

A: Starting August 1, 2020, councils can choose to charge a local program fee, up to but no more than the national membership fee – up to \$60 for youth members in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts; up to \$36 for youth members in Exploring and up to \$36 for adult members. The local program fee can include local insurance costs (i.e., accident, property, etc.), as well as cost to administer unique local programming efforts.

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Q: What happens if my council's program fee is more than the national membership fee?

A: Councils that are currently charging a program fee more than the national membership fee have one year to adjust their fees in order to be in compliance with the new rules.

Q: What measures has the national organization taken to offset the financial challenges?

A: In addition to ongoing efforts to streamline and simplify the organization, the national organization has taken a number of steps in addressing its financial challenges, including the recent elimination of more than 35 positions at the National Service Center and ongoing consolidation of departments for the most effective utilization of resources in support of Scouting.

Q: Will the national membership fee continue to increase?

A: Although no decision about future increases have been made, the cost of operating our organization and services increases every year. Should it be necessary to increase fees in the future, the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America has agreed to evaluate the needs and make such decisions, whenever possible, at the National Annual Meeting in May or early in the summer so that they can be announced with as much lead time as possible to allow for councils and units to be able to plan accordingly.

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