

Chris Farnitano, MD
324 Shenandoah Dr.
Martinez, CA 94553
October 11, 2012

Wayne Brock, Chief Scout Executive
Boy Scouts of America
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane
PO Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015-2079

Dear Mr. Brock:

I am writing to you to strongly protest your actions and the actions of the National Office of the Boy Scouts of America in contributing to the denial of the rank of Eagle Scout to Ryan Andresen of Troop 212 in Moraga and his expulsion from the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of his sexual orientation.

I am an Eagle Scout, scoutmaster for Troop 239 of Mt. Diablo Silverado Council, and the father of two Eagle Scouts and one Life Scout who is working towards Eagle. I have been very proud of my Eagle. I worry that my sons and my scouts will view their Eagle Scout Awards now as more of an embarrassment than a badge of honor.

I work for Contra Costa County, a governmental agency that does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. I worship at a Christian church, St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Pleasant Hill, that does not discriminate, and I pledge my allegiance to a country whose military does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. The Boy Scouts of America continues to practice a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy regarding sexual orientation. This policy destroyed many careers when it was in place in the US military, and it is traumatizing our youth as it is practiced in the BSA. My church has refused to serve as a chartering organization for a local Cub Scout pack as this BSA policy conflicts with our religious commitment to welcome all regardless of sexual orientation.

The Scout Oath pledges a scout to be morally straight. Page 46 of my son's Boy Scout Handbook explains this as "your relationships with others should be honest and open. You should respect and defend the rights of all people." The first point of the Scout Law is "A scout is trustworthy." Page 47 of my son's Boy Scout Handbook explains the meaning of this point of the Scout Law as "A Scout tells the truth. He is honest, and he keeps his promises...your honesty is a sign of your character-the kind of person you are inside. Your parents, teachers, and friends expect you to tell the truth." Ryan Andresen told the truth, and he was punished by being denied the Eagle rank and being thrown out of his scout troop. This was his reward for trying to live the Scout Law.

The Guide to Advancement, BSA publication #33088, states that “no council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to add to, or subtract from, advancement requirements.” Nowhere in the requirements for the rank of Eagle does it state the scout must be heterosexual, or hide his sexual identity if he is not. I believe Ryan Andresen’s scoutmaster and the officials of the Mt. Diablo Silverado Council are in violation of BSA’s own procedures by denying Ryan the Eagle Scout rank when he has successfully completed all the requirements.

This is not a partisan political issue but rather a matter of fairness, acceptance and inclusion. Both current presidential candidates oppose this discriminatory policy of the BSA:

“The president (Barak Obama) believes the Boy Scouts is a valuable organization that has helped educate and build character in American boys for more than a century. He also opposes discrimination in all forms, and as such opposes this policy that discriminates on basis of sexual orientation,” according to White House spokesman Shin Inouye.

“I feel that all people should be allowed to participate in the Boy Scouts, regardless of their sexual orientation,” said Mitt Romney in 1994, a position that his campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul said remains his position today.

You may feel that you were only following BSA National policy and had no choice but to do what you did. But you do have a choice. You can choose to stand up for what is right by voicing your opposition to this policy, and support one of our youth who has worked hard to live up to the ideals of scouting. In 1914, the BSA gave local councils the power to ban African Americans from Scouting. Some councils continued that ban until 1974, when the BSA issued its first policy banning racial discrimination. Racial discrimination in Scouting was wrong then and the policy of banning boys because they are gay is wrong now. A scout is morally straight, yet discrimination is morally wrong. You can choose to hide behind policy or stand up for all our youth and against discrimination.

As a scoutmaster and mentor of youth, I welcome all boys into scouting and would not kick a boy out of my troop if he were to tell me he was gay. Rather, I would support him in continuing to live the Scout Oath and Law in our troop and in his daily life by being trustworthy and telling the truth to himself, his fellow scouts, his friends and family. The principles embodied by the Scout Oath and Law are wonderful ideals I have tried to live by and instill in my children and my scouts. Discrimination is not one of those principles.

Sincerely,

Chris Farnitano, MD
Scoutmaster, Troop 239
Pleasant Hill, CA

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Cc: scoutmaster Rainer Del Valle, Troop 212 Moraga

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church

10 Moraga Valley Lane, Moraga CA 94556

Troop 239
Iron Horse List
National