

## STATEMENT

The roots of Scouting in Southeastern New England are deep and strong. Tens of thousands of Rhode Island and Massachusetts residents count their experiences in the Boy Scouts, and at Camp Yawgoog and Camp Cachalot, as central to their development as good citizens and community leaders. A central theme in our Scouting experience has always been a profound respect for the rights and privileges of all others.

The Narragansett Council has a policy of zero tolerance for inappropriate behavior or sexual advocacy of any kind within its Scouting programs. The Scouting programs do not provide sex education or counseling. We strongly recommend that Scouts look to their parents or guardians, religious leaders, professional educators and health care providers for guidance in this area.

In recent years, the position of the Boy Scouts of America on sexual orientation within Scouting has been a topic of conversation in our community. The Narragansett Council has taken a leadership role in asking the National Council for a fair, open, honest and in-depth review of the national membership standards. We are one of only a few Councils in the country to petition the National Council for an all-encompassing review.

In 2000, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that private membership organizations like the Boy Scouts have the right to establish their own membership and leadership standards. Later that year, we learned from the National Council that the review of membership standards we had requested was complete and that no changes would be forthcoming. The Narragansett Council of Boy Scouts was disheartened by the National Council's decision not to thoroughly and completely review its national membership standards. We believe the completed review was clearly not of the scope and breadth which we recommended.

The Narragansett Council is proud of the leadership we have shown in seeking to have our membership position reviewed. However, we must abide with the National Council's decision, while we continue to seek further consideration.

To the best of our knowledge, no one, neither Scout nor Scouter, in the Narragansett Council has been dismissed due to sexual orientation. In our view, the issue is not about sexual orientation; it is about behavior.

The Boy Scout Mission is to prepare young people to make ethical choices over the course of their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. In our traditional programs, the Boy Scouts asks a boy who wishes to join to subscribe to the Scout Oath and Law. The Scout works with his parents, scout leaders, religious leaders and others in more specifically defining these responsibilities. Nowhere on the application for membership for Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts or Venturers are there questions with respect to an applicant's sexual orientation - nor should there be.

Nor do we ask these questions, or other personal questions, of our adult leaders on their applications. Youth and adult leaders who assume roles of responsibility in Scouting Programs serve as role models for the values espoused in the Scout Oath and Law. Each council has the duty to review the membership status of any Scout or leader, regardless of sexual orientation, for inappropriate behavior of any kind. Again, the issue is behavior.

Meanwhile, our practices will continue to serve the Boy Scout Mission by focusing on our children and asking others to do the same. On the national stage, we hope our actions will serve as a model for other Scout Councils and our National Council. We will continue our dialogue with people of good will within our greater community toward mutual understanding and respect.