News



Boy Scouts place U.S. flags on graves in the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona in Phoenix May 28, 2016. The Boy Scouts of America's board of directors unanimously agreed Oct. 11 to allow girls into the Cub Scout program next year and let older girls become Eagle Scouts. (CNS/Nancy Wiechec)

by Catholic News Service

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The leaders of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting, which has its headquarters in the Dallas suburb of Irving, said they "accept and work with the new membership policy of the Boy Scouts of America" to admit girls.

"We were informed this morning" of the policy change, said an Oct. 11 statement by George Sparks, the national chairman of the group, and the committee's national chaplain, Fr. Kevin Smith, a priest of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York.

"Once we have had more time to review the policy and a chance to consult our national membership, we will be able to comment further about how this new policy will reflect changes in the makeup of Catholic-chartered units," they said.

The Boy Scouts currently have 2.3 million members, less than half than the 5 million they reached in the 1970s, at the peak of the post-World War II baby boom.

The vote to accept girls as members was unanimous, according to a spokeswoman for the Boy Scouts.

The Boy Scouts allowed gay members in 2015, gay troop leaders in 2015 and transgender members last January.

"It is the mission of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting to utilize and ensure the constructive use of the program of the Boy Scouts of America as a viable form of youth ministry with the Catholic youth of our nation," said the statement from Sparks and Smith.

"The National Catholic Committee on Scouting seeks to sustain and strengthen the relationship between the Boy Scouts of America and the Catholic Church and to work cooperatively with the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and various other groups involved in youth ministry in the United States."

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Girl Scouts leaders expressed displeasure over the summer when the Boy Scouts sought advice from its 270 councils on whether to accept girls. Girl Scouts of the USA's president, Kathy Hopinkah Hannan, in a letter to her Boy Scouts counterpart,

Randall Stephenson, said the Boy Scouts should stick to recruiting "the 90 percent of American boys not currently participating in Boy Scouts."

Joseph Carballo, 70, a member of St. Helena Parish in the Bronx, New York, has two grown sons who were both Eagle Scouts. "And we all have the same view: no girls," he told The New York Times Oct. 11.

"Boys and girls should have separate organizations for activities," Carballo added. "There is an organization for girls. It's called the Girl Scouts."