

Gay Activists: Religious Scout Troops Should Have No Religious Rights

On Monday, the Boys Scouts of America voted to allow gay adults to lead troops and work in the organization, while still letting church-chartered troops make their own decisions on this issue. While this is disappointing considering the BSA had already won a long legal battle culminating in a Supreme Court win against those who wanted to disrupted the group's First Amendment freedom of association and force it to admit those living lives inconsistent with its values, it was not unexpected considering the BSA's other recent actions. Despite clearly having constitutional protection, the group gave it up anyway in order to be accepted and make the cultural tension go away. This latest decision is Exhibit A for the claim that law follows culture. But perhaps even more troubling than giving up hard-won constitutional protections was the response of those who benefit from this change. Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin wasn't totally satisfied with the change, but added: "Including an exemption for troops sponsored by religious organizations undermines and diminishes the historic nature of today's decision. Discrimination should have no place in the Boy Scouts, period." Everyone should take note of such statements, as further claims by the HRC and their allies of wanting to protect religious liberty simply can't be trusted. Maybe the HRC never cared about religious liberty in any form, but now just thinks it can get away with making such statements and doesn't have to hide its disregard for the concept anymore. Who knows. Regardless, as David French points out at National Review, the fact that the new BSA policy didn't impose on religious liberty *enough* "displeased the lords of political correctness" like HRC, who "would rather destroy scouting than see it maintain its

culturally and religiously conservative heritage.” Roughly 70 percent of Boy Scout troops are chartered to religious institutions, most of them Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and Mormon. If they are forced to choose between the moral teachings of their faiths and allegiance to a BSA that mandates acceptance of gay Scout leaders, they will opt for the latter. This will lead to the collapse of the Boy Scouts of America as a viable organization. However, this evidently is inconsequential to Chad Griffin and his allies in the LGBT movement. The Mormon church has already expressed concern about this new policy. And many churches behind troops would rather just give up their troops than compromise their beliefs. According to another report on this decision, the “BSA has vowed to provide legal support to any church-backed chartered organizations that are challenged in court over the continued ban.” Far from being heartwarming, however, this statements seems to be a tacit acknowledgement that such suits will be forthcoming. Intolerance always takes its toll on democracy. Contrast Griffin’s position with that of Michael Harrison, a businessman who led Boy Scouts in Orange County, California, who (though still supporting the resolution) said:

There are differences of opinion, and we need to be respectful of doesn’t mean the Mormons have to pick a gay scoutmaster, but please don’t tell the Unitarians they can’t.

While still troublesome in light of the fact that the BSA didn’t need to voluntarily give up its protections, at least such a statement shows some respect for democratic pluralism, unlike Chad Griffin’s. If the HRC and others are going to take the official position of not tolerating private free association in a democratic society, then we must start describing these groups as they have described themselves by their own free adoption of such a position: authoritarian, conformist, and Orwellian.