

California Poised to Strip Boy Scouts of Tax-Exempt Status

Controversy has surrounded the Boy Scouts of America this year, as same-sex activists have pressured the organization to abandon its long-held values and allow homosexual members. Now, they are trying to remove the Boy Scouts' tax-exempt status.

Alliance Defending Freedom sent a letter to members of the California Legislature Friday to explain the significant legal and policy problems of a proposed bill designed to punish nonprofit youth organizations like the **Boy Scouts of America**. The bill would strip organizations like the Boy Scouts of their tax-exempt status if they won't abandon their long-held values and allow themselves to be strong-armed into admitting people into membership who don't hold to those values.

Thirty-nine California attorneys who are part of the more than 2,200 allied attorneys with Alliance Defending Freedom worldwide also signed the letter.

"Youth organizations that have benefitted America for generations should be free from harassment by politicians who don't agree with the very values that have made these groups successful," said Senior Counsel David Cortman. "The Constitution protects the freedom of youth organizations like the Boy Scouts to promote the values that have defined them as an organization and to ensure that their leaders and members adhere to those values."

Under the bill, SB 323, California would strip tax-exempt status from any "organization organized and operated exclusively as a public charity youth organization that discriminates on the basis of gender identity, race, sexual

orientation, nationality, religion, or religious affiliations.” Some of the public charity youth organizations at risk include Little League, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Special Olympics, American Youth Soccer Organization, Future Business Leaders of America, and many religious organizations that serve youth.

The Alliance Defending Freedom letter explains that if the bill is passed, many non-profit youth organizations will be forced “to choose between following their core values and beliefs and losing their tax exemptions or abandoning their beliefs to comply with the law.”

“Freedom of association would prove an empty guarantee if associations could not limit control over their decisions to those who share the interests and persuasions that underlie the association’s being,” the letter states.

“The **First Amendment** protects the freedom of youth organizations to associate with members and leaders who share their values,” added Senior Legal Counsel Jeremy Tedesco. “Our youth deserve to continue to benefit from these groups, and bills like SB 323 severely threaten their ability to do so.”