

Mormons, Boy Scouts Sued for Sexual Abuse of Minors

Four men sued the **Boy Scouts** of America and its largest sponsor, the **Mormon** Church, on Monday accusing both organizations of failing to protect them from sexual abuse by adult volunteers when they were children at scouting activities in Idaho.

Three of the men said they were abused as members of **Boy Scout** troops affiliated with the Utah-based church, two of them by a scout leader previously identified as a molester in a complaint brought by a parent.

The fourth plaintiff belonged to a troop sponsored by a chapter of the Elk Club, which was not named as a defendant in the suit.

All the cases of abuse alleged in the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Boise, the state capital, occurred in the early 1980s and 1970s, when the plaintiffs ranged in age from 12 to 14.

Two of the three accused abusers in the lawsuit—both of whom were linked with the Mormon-sponsored troops—were later convicted of sex crimes against children and are now living as registered sex offenders, court records show.

The lawsuit is the latest in a torrent of court cases in numerous states accusing the Boy Scouts of failing to provide adequate safeguards against pedophiles using the organization to prey on children whose parents were led to believe scouting was safe.

Mounting litigation against the Texas-based Boy Scouts has tarnished the wholesome image of a century-old, largely volunteer organization, which prides itself on building good

character, citizenship and fitness among its 2.7 million members, mostly boys aged 8 to 17.

The Mormon Church, formally known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has been implicated in several such lawsuits. The church required or strongly encouraged boys in the faith to take part in scouts, and for men to volunteer as scout leaders, according to Monday's suit.

The Boy Scouts of America and Mormon Church both declined in separate statements to comment on pending litigation. Both organizations have said they have taken new measures in recent decades to prevent child sexual abuse within their ranks.

An Oregon court last year forced the Boy Scouts to publicly release 20,000 pages of confidential records, dubbed the "perversion files," documenting suspected or confirmed sexual abuse by the group's leaders and volunteers.

One of the alleged abusers named in Monday's suit was only added to the perversion files four years after a scout's mother told scout and church officials her son was abused by him, and another was listed the same year a Mormon-led troop hired him to do graphic design work, the lawsuit claims.

The four plaintiffs, named in the suit only as "John Does I-IV," are seeking undisclosed monetary damages.

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