

# Will 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Boy Scout Chief Lift Ban on Gay Scout Leaders?

As former Defense Secretary Robert Gates is set to head the **Boy Scouts of America**, many are wondering if the official who helped end the U.S. military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy will also lift the scout's ban on gay adult leaders.

The century-old Texas-based organization kicked off its annual meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, on Wednesday as questions lingered over its decision last year to allow gay scouts in its ranks but bar them from adult leadership posts.

Gates, a former CIA director, will succeed Boy Scouts President Wayne Perry, who led the group through the emotionally charged debate in May last year when the council voted to lift a ban on openly gay scouts, a decision criticized by both conservatives opposed to the change and gay rights groups for not going far enough.

**Gay rights** groups are optimistic that Gates, who will officially take his new position Thursday, will end the ban on adult leaders.

Gates was secretary of defense from December 2006 to July 1, 2011, serving both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which barred openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons from military service, was repealed on Dec. 22, 2010.

Gates' appointment could prompt a return of major sponsors, such as Lockheed Martin Corp and Intel Corp, which pulled funding to protest policies seen as discriminatory.

Gay scouts were officially allowed in from Jan. 1, prompting

some parents to pull their boys out of the organization.

A group of conservatives broke away and formed the start-up Trail Life USA, which condemns sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and woman as “sinful before God.”

On Wednesday, gay activists delivered a petition signed by 120,000 people to Inc asking the online retail giant to cut all ties to the Boy Scouts unless the group stops discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation.

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