



To: Council Board Chairs and CEOs
From: Office of the National Board
Date: February 14, 2020
Re: Proposals and Discussion Topics Not Selected for the
2020 National Council Session Agenda

During the G.I.R.L. 2020/55th National Council Session (NCS 2020), the Movement will come together to reinforce our collective commitment to girls and bring a common vision and continued excitement for our organization's future. As part of our democratic process, the Girl Scouts of the USA Board of Directors (the board) invited councils to partner to build a strategic and future-focused agenda for NCS 2020.

During this governance cycle, the board received nine proposals from councils and five discussion topics from councils and the G.I.R.L. Team (G-Team) for consideration for placement on the NCS 2020 agenda. The board welcomed the submissions and spent significant time considering all matters for potential placement on the agenda. The board also considered the level of council support, the feedback that council board chairs and CEOs provided at the November 2019 Board Chair/CEO Conference, delegate input, and the recommendations of the NCS Advisory Team.

The Early Alert, which is being sent at the same time as this memo, describes the proposals and discussion topic selected for inclusion on the NCS 2020 agenda, including four council proposals, two proposals recommended by the NCS Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup after receiving input from the Movement leadership, and a discussion topic the G-Team suggested. Specifically, the agenda that has been selected for NCS 2020 is:

Proposals

- A. Establishment of a Task Force to Examine the Feasibility of a National Gold Award Scholarship Foundation
- B. Constitutional Amendment on Consistency in Delegate Terms
- C. Constitutional Amendment on Membership Dues
- D. Adoption of a Procedure for Communication on Dues Actions by the National Board
- E. Membership Dues Increase Restriction
- F. Lifetime Membership Discount

Discussion Topic

- A. Girl Speak Out

Given this vibrant and extensive agenda, more time is being allotted to the NCS schedule than in 2014 or 2017.

This memorandum provides details about the proposals and discussion topics that were not selected.

Summary

The board determined to not place the following proposals and discussion topics on the NCS 2020 agenda:

Proposals

1. Engaging National Delegates Throughout the Triennium
2. Girl Scout Gold Award Lifetime Membership Proposal
3. Two Proposals Regarding Electronic or Virtual Special Sessions
4. Amending the Girl Scout Promise and Law Proposal and Discussion Topic

Discussion Topics

1. Two National Properties Discussion Topics
2. More Flexible Geographic Membership for Adults

In the remainder of this memo, we share the reasons for these decisions and the next steps for some of the ideas that were not selected for the agenda.

Engaging National Delegates Throughout the Triennium Proposal

This proposal provides that the board and Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) staff would engage delegates in decision influencing throughout the triennium by consulting them at least once a year on a range of substantive topics.

The board agrees with the goal of strengthening delegate engagement and input. In furtherance of this goal, GSUSA has already taken active steps to improve the delegate experience and has implemented a delegate engagement strategy. Accomplishments to date include:

- Hiring a full-time National Engagement Lead devoted to enhancing delegate engagement throughout the triennium
- Reactivating the Girl Scout Delegate Official Website (Delegate Website) to begin communicating more frequently with delegates in between National Council Sessions
- Hosting a call in August 2019, which Girl Scouts of the USA's CEO, Sylvia Acevedo, led for all delegates on the state of the Movement
- Posting materials on the Delegate Website about the board's members and meetings
- Gathering feedback from delegates on various proposal concepts through the Delegate Website
- Adding delegate engagement and Movement-wide governance sessions to GSUSA-led training sessions for new council CEOs and board chairs
- Distributing more delegate training and education materials to councils
- Working with councils to find more opportunities for board members to attend councils' annual meetings and other council events to meet and hear from delegates

The Delegate Website will continue to be active throughout the triennium to promote two-way communication on topics important to the Movement. Proposal forums on the Delegate Website have already been created to solicit input from delegates on the matters that will be discussed at NCS 2020.

In addition, the board has placed a council-submitted proposal on the National Council Session agenda—consistency in delegate terms—which is expected to strengthen the delegate experience and further delegate engagement. As described in the Early Alert, if adopted this proposal would have delegates across the Movement start their term in the year prior to the year of regularly scheduled National Council Sessions. This change would give all delegates more time to become familiar with their roles at the NCS and help shape the proposals they will ultimately be voting on.

Because increased delegate engagement is already under way, the proposal was not selected.

Girl Scout Gold Award Lifetime Membership Proposal

This proposal seeks free lifetime membership for all Gold Award Girl Scouts in an effort to raise awareness and the prestige of the Gold Award, as well as create a retention incentive for Gold Award Girl Scouts after graduation.

The board agrees that these goals are important objectives. GSUSA has been working with councils to develop other strategies and initiatives to elevate the Gold Award both internally within Girl Scouts and externally to the public. For example, GSUSA has:

- Created a thought partner group of council CEOs and COOs to develop and provide feedback on Gold Award strategies
- Launched quarterly updates of Gold Award marketing assets on gsConnect (a platform for sharing information among council and GSUSA staff) to assist councils in promoting the Gold Award, with the ability for councils to customize those assets for their own communities
- Designed and launched a streamlined and comprehensive [GoGold 2.0](#) web app to support a high-quality program
- Developed and launched a national [“Meet Your Match”](#) marketing campaign, including a PSA
- Launched a [digital credential for the Gold Award](#) to enable those in the Gold Award Girl Scout family to showcase this achievement on their LinkedIn profiles
- Revised the [Blue Book](#) policy, in consultation with councils, to enable girls (with council permission) to raise funds in support of their Gold Award efforts
- Dedicated a highest awards project manager to develop strategies for our Silver, Bronze, and Gold Awards, with a specific focus on elevating the Gold Award and assisting councils in supporting a robust Gold Award program

GSUSA has also been developing a strategy to engage key educator audiences, including teachers, counselors, and principals, to raise awareness of the leadership skills and sustainable impact that a Gold Award Girl Scout has on her community. Additionally, GSUSA has funded research that the Girl Scout Research Institute has been undertaking to evaluate positive outcomes in Girl Scout alums and the value and benefit of the Gold Award to Gold Award Girl Scouts. Additional initiatives are in the works, including creating retention strategies for this important group.

Although increased focus on the Gold Award is important, this proposal was not selected because it is inconsistent with the constitutional requirement in Article IX that anyone wishing to become a member of the Girl Scout Movement must pay membership dues. In addition, free memberships would impact revenues. Women under 30 can already purchase a discounted lifetime membership available for all graduating girls and alums under 30.

Proposals Regarding Electronic or Virtual Special Sessions

Two proposals were submitted for constitutional amendments to allow virtual or electronic special sessions of the National Council.

The concept of adapting to and incorporating modern technology-based ways of communication to enhance the democratic process resonated strongly with the board. It explored whether electronic special sessions would be feasible or advantageous for the Movement. This included consulting with two parliamentarians and examining the technology needed to implement an electronic NCS.

Given the role that technology has played in streamlining how we communicate, the proposals seemed intuitively appealing; however, after further research, it became clear that an electronic special session would not work at this time, given the technology required, the cost, and the size of the delegate body. Importantly, an electronic session would not create the same experience for dialogue and communication, which is fundamental to the deliberations of the National Council body and the democratic process of Girl Scouts. Delegates continue to comment on the importance of hearing and interacting with other Girl Scouts as being extremely important and rewarding in shaping their perspectives on national governance matters.

Both parliamentarians expressed that it is not currently possible to hold an electronic meeting for a body of this size that would be compliant with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (RONR) and the fundamental character of a deliberative assembly. Their full opinions are available on the Delegate Website.

They found that electronic meetings work best for smaller deliberative bodies. GSUSA's delegate body may be up to 1,500 individuals. Managing electronic debate and decision making under RONR for a group of this size would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. RONR allows for electronic meetings when they, at a minimum, provide the opportunity for "simultaneous aural communication among all participating members equivalent to those of meetings held in one room or area." In addition, the technology must be able to:

- Verify delegate identity, both initially and ongoing
- Confirm a quorum
- Ensure that only properly credentialed delegates vote
- Protect the sanctity of the vote, including maintaining the secrecy of a ballot
- Have a method for seeking recognition during debate and for obtaining priority among different types of motions and points of order (e.g., ensuring that a point of order takes precedence over a request to speak in opposition)
- Have functionality to make amendments to motions and to take a vote on main motions and subsidiary motions

Both parliamentarians have advised that they are unaware of any technology that could satisfy these requirements and do not know of any meetings of this size that are conducted electronically or virtually.

The costs of the technology to ensure verification of delegates and the security of the votes, which one parliamentarian shared would likely require biometric authentication technology, was significant. There would also be additional costs to councils, and potentially for delegates, for technology adaptations on their end as well as potential accommodations for those with visual or hearing impairments.

GSUSA will continue to seek additional ways for delegate engagement and input, but the core elements of the Girl Scout democratic process—which include an active and robust National Council body—cannot, at this time, be satisfactorily maintained with an electronic special session.

Amending the Girl Scout Promise and Law (Proposal and Discussion Topic)

GSUSA received a proposal to amend the Girl Scout Promise and Law to change “I will try” and “I will do my best” to “I will,” and to change “I will serve God and my country” to “I will respect God and my country.” The same council also submitted this proposal as a discussion topic.

A troop composed of Girl Scout Juniors gathered support for the proposal by conducting research, sending letters, creating a video, and encouraging their local mayor to support the proposal. The originating council expressed the view that “softening” the Promise and Law with words like “try” and “do my best” undercuts the authority, power, and capability of girls.

First and foremost, the board acknowledges and commends the girl-led efforts behind this proposal, the thoughtful research these Girl Scouts gathered, and the advocacy they employed. The video the girls created was persuasive and heartfelt.

The board wants to hear more voices and to continue the dialogue on this important topic. The limited time and procedural constraints of a proposal or formal NCS discussion topic do not lend themselves to the amount of collective Movement-wide dialogue that should be devoted to this topic—especially since the word changes that are being suggested to the Girl Scout Promise and Law concern language about “respecting” versus “serving” God and country, as well as language about “trying” and the many ways this word could be interpreted.

The Promise and Law reflect the most important words in Girl Scouting. They summarize who we are, what we believe, and how we commit to act in our daily lives. Our Promise and Law are grounded in the idea that girls develop these skills over time and learn more about themselves in the process. These fundamental beliefs are not changed frequently, and when change is considered, it should include significant reflection, input, and deliberation.

Taskforces or other Movement-wide groups have gathered input, research, and feedback in the past regarding changes to our Promise and Law. For example, during the 47th NCS in 1996, a proposal to change the Law (but not the Promise) was placed

after a taskforce conducted a comprehensive review of the origins, interpretations, and perceptions of the wording in both the Promise and Law and sought and received considerable Movement-wide feedback. The taskforce collected input from council discussion groups involving thousands of girls, volunteers, and staff; tested alternative wording through a national survey; surveyed council leadership; and engaged in more research and input gathering. A similar process was undertaken before amending the Promise and Law at the 39th NCS in 1972. Additional material from the 1972 and 1996 Workbook describing this process is available on the Delegate Website.

This type of Movement-wide feedback-gathering process has not been undertaken here, and only a small portion of councils supported placing this proposal on the agenda. Divergent views may exist on the changes proposed. For example, the proposal included changing “serve” to “respect” in connection with a Girl Scout’s relationship with God and country, which was not fully explored in the rationale. Although the proposal did not provide significant background on this suggested change, there are likely varying viewpoints on it. The concept of serving God and country may have a particular meaning to those who have served our country, for example. Others may feel that “respect” is a better word to capture the relationships.

The central focus of the proposal on the “try” language will likely also bring up different points of view. For example, the “try” language has been part of our Promise and Law for over 100 years, and some believe that it is fundamental to Girl Scouts’ ethos that girls should be able to take risks, fail, and try again. Trying new things is [called out as a life skill](#) in Girl Scouts’ *Raising Awesome Girls*.

Given all of this, the board believes more comprehensive dialogue on this topic is important prior to bringing this proposal or discussion topic to the National Council.

The board has therefore directed GSUSA staff to include an interactive education session on the central tenet this proposal and discussion topic raised—the “try” language in the Girl Scout Promise and Law—during G.I.R.L. 2020’s convention program so that more Movement voices can weigh in and further explore the topic. The outcome of that session and additional conversations, involving more voices, will be helpful in assessing next steps.

Discussion Topics: National Properties Strategy

GSUSA received two requests for a discussion about our national properties strategy.

Although property strategy is a topic of wide interest, GSUSA, in collaboration with councils, has already been undertaking Movement-wide work to analyze many of the questions raised by this topic. The property strategies work focuses on helping councils build their capacity to manage and leverage properties and establish a legacy of stewardship for properties to better support and deliver our program to girls. In 2019, GSUSA hired a full-time vice president for property strategy to lead this effort with

guidance from a Property Strategy Advisory Committee, which includes members from ten councils.

GSUSA also engaged a national real estate advisory company to guide us in this work. Working in partnership with GSUSA and councils, the company is analyzing council data to evaluate properties by region, program, and function and identify target areas where improved properties can increase both property use and membership. The work includes an initial baseline analysis, such as the identification of opportunities to improve facilities, management, and use. Then, based on those findings, the advisory company will make recommendations. Each council will continue to make long-term strategic plans for the properties it owns.

We began gathering and analyzing data in December 2019. As of February 1, 2020, 88 councils had provided their data, with an additional 14 expected to participate. The baseline analysis for each council, which is projected to be complete in March 2020, will analyze council data using mapping software to show relationships and patterns. The analysis will chart properties against existing membership bases, demographic trends, access to partners, and other mission-critical criteria. Additional information about the findings and next steps will continue to be communicated.

Discussion Topic: More Flexible Geographic Membership for Adults

A council submitted a request for a discussion at NCS regarding whether adult Girl Scout membership should be associated with a single council or should be more flexible to accommodate adults who live near council borders or in different council jurisdictions at different times of the year, and who wish to volunteer for multiple councils. Although these questions raise interesting considerations for membership and volunteer engagement and retention, the topic may be better served in an operational discussion rather than a governance forum. The geographic flexibility suggestion has been referred to the operational membership team at GSUSA for further discussion and review.

Thank You!

The board appreciates the effort that so many members in our Movement dedicated to developing these important proposals and their engagement in our democratic process. We look forward to seeing you in Orlando to continue to set a vibrant path forward for Girl Scouts!