

B. Constitutional Amendment: Amend the Girl Scout Promise and Law to use more potent, actionable language.

Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey

Proposal

THAT the Preamble of the Constitution of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America be amended to delete the words “try,” “to,” and “do my best” and to insert the word “will.”

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
THE GIRL SCOUT PROMISE: On my honor, I will try: To serve God and my country, To help people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law. THE GIRL SCOUT LAW: I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and do, and to respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout.	THE GIRL SCOUT PROMISE: On my honor, I will try: To Serve God and my country, To Help people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law. THE GIRL SCOUT LAW: I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and do, and to <u>will</u> respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout.	THE GIRL SCOUT PROMISE: On my honor, I will: Serve God and my country, Help people at all times, And live by the Girl Scout Law. THE GIRL SCOUT LAW: I will be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and do, and will respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Proviso: this change would take effect with the 2024 Membership Year, with printed items to be fully refreshed by the start of the 2025 Membership Year.

Rationale Submitted by Originating Council

Girl Scouts is an organization committed to providing a safe space for young people while encouraging sampling, civil discourse, social-emotional growth, and grit, all to produce sensitive, successful change-makers of the next generation. Yet, Generation Z, current teens and young adults, is the most cynical generation of our lifetime [according to The New York Times](#). Growing up in social turmoil—unrepentant mass shootings in schools, racially-motivated violence, alarming climate change, a bungled response to global pandemic, unprecedented uncertainty—Gen Z’s disaffection for legacy institutions is justified. As Sofia Chang was welcomed as National CEO, [she noted that](#) “as Girl Scouts [enters] its 110th year of service, the mission to develop and create opportunities for all girls is more critical than ever.” If Girl Scouts wishes to “grow, become more inclusive, and positively impact the lives of all girls and young women,” then the Movement must take bold steps to modernize—beginning with our core values: the Promise and Law.

The proposed change to the Girl Scout Promise and Law is [inspired by Troop 20923](#) when they learned of the teachings of [Dr. Cindy Wahler](#), a psychologist and expert in human behavior. Dr. Wahler posits that individuals who use more potent, actionable language are more successful. In September 2021, Dr. Wahler offered a virtual session on Impactful Communication to 120 council leaders, which may be viewed [as a recording](#) (passcode: GSHNJ#IWill). In her lecture, Dr. Wahler points out that American women tend to diminish the power of their own communication through word choices like “It’s just my opinion, but...” Further, women’s habitual resistance to self-promote leads them to interject phrases like “I hope to...” or “I would like to...” as opposed to using declarative, deliberate language like “I will...” Individuals who use impactful language to clearly articulate ideas and goals are more likely to receive an interview, be promoted, and find success. Troop 20923 instinctively understood this, noticing that even in their fourth-grade class, differences in behavior—and resulting outcomes—were a reflection of divergent communication styles. If the line between childhood self-identity and future ambition is clear, then Girl Scouts plays a key role in teaching one million of tomorrow’s leaders to express themselves with authority and assurance.

Girl Scouts’ recent rebrand is already demonstrating impactful communication [principles](#): “To move our story forward, we use a voice that’s encouraging, emotive, thoughtful, inclusive, and bold. As Girl Scouts, we speak and show up distinctly.” Our brand tenets include being emotive and substantive, speaking thoughtfully but unreservedly, with bold determination. Removing “try” from the Promise and Law is all that is necessary to transform them into potent, motivating calls to action, fully embracing and internalizing Girl Scouts’ aspirational brand. Removing “try” signals Girl Scouts’ willingness to examine traditions, remaining faithful to customs that serve our members and doing away with those that are no longer relevant to this generation.

“Trying” remains the key inspiration for Girl Scout programming at all levels: exploring, experimenting, failing, innovating, growing. The Girl Scout Law, however, describes foundational behaviors—a moral compass—instilled into every member who promises to live by them. They are universal values, evolving over time, meant to affirm every Girl Scout’s potential and ambition regardless of culture, religion, or family history. There is no space for “trying” when it comes to morality or core values.

In the increasingly competitive youth development market, there is no space for disregarding the impact of today's social chaos on our youth. Over the four years that Troop 20923 has been advocating for this change, they've discovered an increasing appetite for participating in traditions while adapting them for modern self-expression. [A national survey](#) following national delegates' discussion of this topic during the 2020 National Council Session suggests a high tolerance for this change, and an agreement on its timeliness within the context of our current political and social climate.

Gen Z is a nuanced, politically-motivated group, seething with moral passion and ready to create cultural transformation. Girl Scouts can lead the charge. Girl Scouts *will* lead the charge.

Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Council

GSHNJ is not in a position to calculate exact budgetary costs for a change of this type as we do not have access to GSUSA's vendor agreements. However, we offer that in the digital age, Girl Scouts are being encouraged to forgo printed materials or provide "print on demand" resources rather than consuming expensively-produced printed materials that minimize the need for retroactive editing of the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

If Girl Scouts makes a change of this type on the national stage, a collective call to the media will result in a net positive impact on the Movement by boosting the visibility of the brand and offering another opportunity to address the "scout" confusion in the marketplace. Local councils could leverage increased national media attention to generate more membership and volunteer leads, provide dynamic corporate partnership opportunities, and explore new avenues of revenue and program diversification.

Recommendation of the National Board

The board remains neutral on adoption of this constitutional amendment because:

- the Promise and Law language is a complex multifaceted issue;
- historically, extensive Movement-wide research and discussion has occurred prior to this type of significant change to the Promise and Law to thoroughly assess child development research, consider impact on program changes and council support, etc. This research and impact assessment has not taken place; and
- no Movement deliberative group, taskforce, working group or otherwise, has presented a recommendation to inform a board position on this issue.

Words matter. In addition to the literal meaning of a word, words also evoke ideas and feelings. The same word can create different ideas or feelings for each person hearing or reading that word. The focus of this proposal on the words "will" and "try" is likely to bring up different feelings and ideas for different individuals.

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. The words we use to describe these values have evolved over time as our Movement has evolved and when changes were considered, done with significant reflection, input, and deliberation. That is the rationale for the historical use of

taskforces or other Movement-wide groups to gather input, research, and feedback prior to making changes to our Promise and Law.

While Movement-wide research and testing has not been done, this is the third consecutive triennium where a proposal on revising the Promise and Law in this way has been suggested for placement BY GIRLS on the NCS agenda. Prior to COVID-19 requiring a virtual meeting, the board planned to hold a discussion on this proposal. As the NCS 2020 was virtual, GSUSA supported the originating council in conducting an attendance-optional virtual discussion in 2020 to seek girl input on the Promise and Law. As this is a recurring topic, the board is placing the proposal for a vote.

The NCS Advisory Team recommended this be placed as a discussion topic.