



National Council Session Alert

February 2023

In July 2023, Girl Scouts from across our country and around the world will gather for the 56th time to conduct the important business of our Movement, using our democratic process to do so. Juliette Gordon Low said it best: “The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers.” Girl Scouts convened its first National Council Session in 1915, engaging women in a democratic process five years before the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted American women the right to vote. For more than a century, delegates have come together to use their collective voices—to select leaders and discuss and make decisions on topics on the future direction of Girl Scouts, always with the girls we serve as the focus of these meetings. Girl perspective shapes our decisions. In fact, at our 55th National Council Session in 2020, nearly 28% of the elected delegates who attended were girl members. We have a lot to be proud of!

As we continue to prepare for our 56th National Council Session, this document outlines the items that will be placed on the agenda based on insights from local volunteers, council leaders and council staff, national leaders and GSUSA staff, and the volunteers who serve as members of the Girl Scouts of the USA Board of Directors (the “board”). The overarching goal for the 56th National Council Session is to hold an inspiring and energizing gathering—where we have productive and efficient discussions and make decisions in support of strategic objectives, and elect leaders for the next triennium. Collectively and collaboratively, we will create a strong future for Girl Scouting.

Summary

The board has placed the following proposals and discussion topic on the 56th NCS agenda:

Discussion Topic

Democratic Process and Delegate Voice

Proposals (in alphabetical order by proposal title)

- A. Constitutional Amendment: Allowing the possibility of virtual attendance for National Council Sessions and for Special Sessions of the National Council.
- B. Constitutional Amendment: Amend the Girl Scout Promise and Law to use more potent, actionable language,
- C. Constitutional Amendment: Formula for Delegates
- D. Constitutional Amendment: Timing of Delegate Allotment
- E. Constitutional Amendment: Council Representation on the National Board
- F. Constitutional Amendment: DEIRJ Language Proposal
- G. Girl Scouts Gold Award Scholarship Fund

This document describes how the discussion topic and proposals were selected; provides more details on each, including the rationale by the originator, as well as the board’s recommendation on each proposal as required by the Constitution. The Workbook will be issued in May 2023 and will provide more information, including the slate of nominees for the board, national board development committee and the order of the agenda.

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56th NCS Discussion Topic & Proposal Process

For a second consecutive triennium, a National Council Session (NCS) Advisory Team was created to provide guidance in planning for the 56th National Council Session. The 12-member team, comprised of both girl and adult members, includes current and former National Board and council board members, council CEOs, and National Council delegates. The members are from small, medium, and large councils in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The team is charged with reviewing proposals and discussion topics for strategic impact, making recommendations on how councils and GSUSA can prepare and engage delegates,¹ providing input to the board regarding the impact of proposals on councils and the Movement, and advising on creating an engaging and productive NCS agenda.

Every council was invited to partner with the NCS Advisory Team and the board in building a strategic and future-focused agenda for the 56th National Council Session. All councils were given the opportunity to suggest topics for the agenda via a proposal and discussion topic submission process that took place from August 2021 through June 2022. The Office of the National Board received a total of ten proposals and five discussion topics from councils. The board suggested three proposals and the NCS Advisory Team itself suggested one proposal.

The NCS Advisory Team considered each discussion topic and proposal—the pros and cons of adopting it, what it would take to implement it, and additional information needed to make final recommendations. They sought advice from subject matter experts, legal counsel, and parliamentarians. Over 600 delegates responded to surveys providing feedback on topics for discussion, how discussions could be structured and NCS logistics. Delegates were provided with education on how to propose agenda items and an early submission process was created where councils could receive feedback on potential NCS proposals before the final submission deadline.

At the Board Chair/CEO Conference (an annual meeting of council and GSUSA leadership) in November 2022, the NCS Advisory Team, on behalf of the board, presented a draft agenda for feedback from council leaders. This conversation provided important feedback to inform the board's continued deliberation on the agenda. At its January 2023 meeting, the board voted on the discussion topics and proposals for the National Council Session agenda in July 2023. An agenda overview was shared with councils on January 31, 2023, and posted to the delegate website on February 1, 2023. This National Council Session Alert provides additional information about those agenda items.

A separate memorandum is also provided addressing the topics and proposals that were not selected for placement on the 56th NCS agenda.

¹ References to “delegates” in this National Council Session Alert refer to delegates to the National Council.

The Agenda

Discussion Topic

Democratic Process and Delegate Voice

Discussion topics have an important role in our governance process. One of the critical roles of the National Council identified in the Constitution is providing guidance to the National Board “upon general lines of direction of the Movement and program.” Discussion topics are purposefully selected to highlight matters where delegates collectively will benefit from hearing multiple viewpoints. Often, they are topics which need more time for consideration prior to acting on the issue in the form of a proposal. Additionally, discussion topics allow for dialogue in a less constrained format and in ways that *Robert’s Rules of Order* sometimes inhibits. This input informs both future delegate action during future National Council Sessions, as well as actions by the National Board on governance matters or GSUSA/council management teams on operational changes during the time between National Council Sessions. To gather more input from delegates and visitors, discussion topics may also be extended into the Hall of Experiences in the form of surveys, “chat areas”, etc.

This discussion topic was created specifically in response to feedback from council leadership as well as delegate input. As a constantly evolving organization, we must consider how governance keeps pace. GSUSA received eight topics related to governance. That is why a fulsome conversation is appropriate. Incorporating themes from the suggested governance-related proposals not placed on the agenda (Role of the National Council & Frequency of National Council Sessions, Ensuring the Importance and Effectiveness of the Democratic Process in the Movement, Credentials and Amendment to Credentials Section) into a discussion may be more impactful if considered together vs. one by one for a delegate vote. A thorough discussion can improve how our National Council delegates have a voice in our governance processes. To ensure that the outcomes of such delegate discussion are advanced in a meaningful way, the board will create a Movement Governance Advisory Team. This team will take the results of the discussion at the 56th NCS, solicit additional feedback from Movement stakeholders, further examine the governance structure of GSUSA, and make recommendations to the National Board and National Council on potential changes to the governance documents, policies, and practices of GSUSA. The team will provide periodic updates to the board and delegates and may recommend practices for immediate action which do not require further deliberation by the National Council. The team will further present a final report no later than NCS 2026 reflecting all input received.

Proposals

A. Constitutional Amendment: Allowing the possibility of virtual attendance for National Council Sessions and for Special Sessions of the National Council.

Originated by Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania

Proposal

To amend the Constitution and Bylaws of GSUSA as follows:

Update Article V Sections 1, 3, and 4 of the *Blue Book of Basic Documents*, page 9, by inserting the bolded, green wording, as follows:

Section 1

There shall be a regular session of the National Council held triennially at such time and place as determined by the National Board of Directors. Notice of the time, place, and purpose of such session shall be mailed **or delivered electronically** not less than 60 days before the session to each local council, to each USA Girl Scouts Overseas committee, and to each member of the National Board of Directors and National Board Development Committee.

Section 3

Notice of the special session, stating the time, place, and specific purpose, shall be mailed **or delivered electronically** not less than 30 days before the session to each local council, each delegate from USA Girl Scouts Overseas, each member of the National Board of Directors and the National Board Development Committee, each Past President, and each member elected by the National Council who is entitled to vote at such session.

Section 4

Two hundred members of the National Council present in person shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at sessions of the National Council, provided, however, that delegates are present from one or more local councils in a majority of the geographical areas of the country as defined in the Bylaws. **At the sole discretion of the National Board, any National Council session may be held in whole or in part by means of the internet or other electronic communications technology pursuant to which the members of the National Council have the opportunity to read or hear the proceedings substantially concurrently with their occurrence, vote on matters submitted to the members, pose questions, and make comments. Attendance through such means shall constitute presence in person at such meeting for quorum and voting purposes.** In the absence of a quorum, a majority of those present at the time and place set for a session may take an adjournment from time to time until a quorum shall be present.

Rationale Submitted by Originating Council

In advance of the 2020 NCS, two proposals were submitted for constitutional amendments to allow virtual or electronic special sessions of the National Council. At that time, the National Board opted not to include this proposal in the slate for NCS 2020. Here are a few of their remarks on this topic.

- The concept of adapting to and incorporating modern technology-based ways of communication to enhance the democratic process resonated strongly with the board.
- 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.
- Electronic sessions would not create the same experience for dialogue, communication, and interaction with other members.
- Parliamentarians expressed that it is not currently possible to hold an electronic meeting that would be compliant with *Robert's Rules of Order NR*.
- Managing electronic debate and decision-making under *RONR* for a group of this size would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.
- Parliamentarians were unaware of any technology that could satisfy the requirements of an NCS (verify identity of delegates, confirm a quorum, safeguard votes, etc.).
- The costs of the technology would be significant and there could also be additional costs for councils and potentially delegates.

Then COVID-19 happened, and rather than canceling the 2020 NCS, GSUSA found a way through these obstacles and objections to make our groundbreaking first virtual session a reality. Delegates, councils, and members agree that, while not ideal, the virtual session was successful. Here are a few positive outcomes:

- An electronic session did work; the technology does exist.
- Technology is ever-evolving; better ways and more cost-effective ways will become available.
- GSUSA is one of many organizations and corporations that can and will incorporate this technology into everyday business.
- GSUSA was able to follow *RONR* on a virtual platform.
- *Robert's Rules 12th Edition* now includes four sets of sample rules for electronic meetings designed to meet various needs, along with bylaw provisions sufficient to authorize such meetings.
- It is possible to manage electronic debate, identification of participants, reach a quorum, and safeguard votes virtually.
- GSUSA managed the cost of holding a virtual NCS.

Plus, the National Board of Directors already allows their members to have a virtual presence in their meetings; per the *Blue Book*, Bylaws Article I, Section 3: "A majority of the National Board must be present (in person or linked by telecommunication or by means such that all members participating in the meeting are able to hear one another [italics added for emphasis]) to constitute a quorum." We believe offering this same option to the National Council illustrates understanding and equity and, therefore, should be allowed.

- Implementing virtual access and participation in National Council Sessions and special sessions of the National Council promotes inclusivity within our membership by eliminating the need to

travel in order to attend, a cost barrier for some.

- Eliminating the need for travel also accommodates other circumstances that may affect our members such as school and work obligations, weather-related issues, and medical issues.
- This proposal supports and encourages the use of technology, aligning with concepts we promote in our program.
- This proposal allows our organization to be nimble under any circumstances that may come up.
- We have already done virtual; we can continue to do virtual, and it's time we bring our Constitution up to date to account for this.

Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Council

Without having access to actual budget amounts for the 2020 NCS, we have hypothesized impacts on income and expenses in the chart below. Evaluation of these factors implies that in-person meetings have a greater financial impact than virtual meetings for both GSUSA and councils. For 2020, we assume that money not spent on in-person expenses was invested in technology to make the virtual meeting a reality.

Virtual meetings are estimated to be less expensive for both the host and participants; however, there is a different dynamic. Given the current state of technology and the current state of the world, allowing the National Board to make an informed decision offers the best of both worlds in terms of flexibility, timeliness, and equitable access.

Expense or Income Item:	In-person Increase	In-person Decrease	Virtual Increase	Virtual Decrease
Rental of convention center	X			X
Hall of Experiences	X			X
Video broadcast within site	X			X
Security	X			X
Printed materials	X		X	
Swag	X			
Food	X			X
Transportation around site	X			X
GSUSA volunteer, board, staff costs	X			
Entertainment/keynote costs	X			
Voting tabulation system	X			
Credentialing—virtual		X	X	
Income—sponsorships	X			X
Income—ticket sales	X			X
Income—exhibitor fees	X			X
Income—retail merch	X			X
Contract with virtual platform vendor		X	X	
Virtual voting platform			X	
Expanded tech support			X	
Councils—transportation, hotel, food for delegates	X			X
Councils—registration fees	X			X
Members at large—upgraded tech and internet access		X	X	
Members at large—cost of attendance	X			X
Tabulation:	18	3	6	13

Recommendation of the National Board

The board recommends adoption of this constitutional amendment. If adopted, it would:

- preserve the ability to conduct in-person meetings.
- provide flexibility for virtual sessions, which could be scheduled more quickly in response to urgent matters as opposed to being limited to an in-person format.
- allow for electronic notification of a session which may be more efficient and cost-effective than sending printed information.

The NCS Advisory Team supports the proposal.

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.

C. Constitutional Amendment: Formula for Delegates

Farthest North Girl Scout Council

Proposal

To amend Article IV, National Council, Section 5, by striking the number 3,500 in every place where it occurs and replacing it with the number 1,000 and by striking the word “no” and replacing it with the words the words “as close to but not” in the last sentence.

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
FORMULA FOR DELEGATES Each local council to which a charter has been issued and remains in force shall be entitled to the following delegates based on the number of girls under its jurisdiction who are members of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America as of September 30 of the year preceding the regular session of the National Council: a. two (2) delegates; b. one (1) additional delegate for up to 3,500 girls; c. one (1) additional delegate for every 3,500 girls thereafter.	FORMULA FOR DELEGATES Each local council to which a charter has been issued and remains in force shall be entitled to the following delegates based on the number of girls under its jurisdiction who are members of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America as of September 30 of the year preceding the regular session of the National Council: a. two (2) delegates; b. one (1) additional delegate for up to 3,500 1,000 girls; c. one (1) additional delegate for every 3,500 1,000 girls thereafter.	FORMULA FOR DELEGATES Each local council to which a charter has been issued and remains in force shall be entitled to the following delegates based on the number of girls under its jurisdiction who are members of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America as of September 30 of the year preceding the regular session of the National Council: a. two (2) delegates; b. one (1) additional delegate for up to 1,000 girls; c. one (1) additional delegate for every 1,000 girls thereafter.
USA Girl Scouts Overseas collectively shall be entitled to the number of delegates according to the same formula prescribed for local councils.	USA Girl Scouts Overseas collectively shall be entitled to the number of delegates according to the same formula prescribed for local councils.	USA Girl Scouts Overseas collectively shall be entitled to the number of delegates according to the same formula prescribed for local councils.
The prescribed figure of 3,500 girls may be adjusted when necessary to keep the total membership of the National Council no larger than 1,500.	The prescribed figure of 3,500 1,000 girls may be adjusted when necessary to keep the total membership of the National Council no as close to but not larger than 1,500.	The prescribed figure of 1,000 girls may be adjusted when necessary to keep the total membership of the National Council as close to but not larger than 1,500.

Proviso: That this action become effective for the 2026 National Council Session.

Rationale Submitted by Originating Council

The formula for the delegate body of council delegates was amended at the 2008 National Council Session, during the implementation of the Core Business Strategy. In 2008, the girl membership was 2,495,812. The number of councils was being reduced from 312 to 109. At the 2008 National Council Session, the delegates established the optimal size of the National Council body at 1,500 council delegates. Therefore, the formula was established to add council delegates accordingly using 3,500 girls as the threshold.

However, that formula did not hold up for even one National Council Session because girl membership was on a steep decline. The girl membership has continued to decline every year. The National Board of Directors used a modified formula of 2,000 girls in 2011, 2014, 2017; and 1,500 girls in 2020 and 2023. This resulted in the following number of delegates for those respective years:

2011: 1,296 National Council delegates, 7.6% decrease in membership since 2008

2014: 1,195 National Council delegates, 13% decrease in membership since 2011

2017: 1,027 National Council delegates, 12.1% decrease in membership since 2014

2020: 1,158 National Council delegates, 16.9% decrease in membership since 2017 (formula change)

2023: 846 National Council delegates projected, 27.3% decrease in membership from 2020–21

With the dramatic decrease in membership from 2019-2022, using the same girl formula of 1,500 would result in a delegate body of approximately 846 delegates for the 2023 National Council Session. It is safe to assume the girl membership will never recover to its former days of 2.5 million. Therefore, a Constitution change to the formula is long overdue.

Assuming the girl membership levels-off at its current amount of approximately 1,100,000 girl members, and no further decreases occur, an adjusted formula to add council delegates for every 1,000 girls would result in a delegate body of 1,320 for the 2026 National Council Session.

Finally, the wording change to add the phrase "as close to but not" larger than 1,500 council delegates is important because the GSUSA Board of Directors has interpreted the phrase "no larger than 1,500" to mean any number smaller than 1,500. However, the National Council in 2008 rejected the proposal by GSUSA to reduce the size of the National Council to 1,000 council delegates. An amendment was passed to increase the council delegate body to 1,500, where it stands today. Therefore, it is understood that the 2008 delegates did not want to allow the delegate body to shrink smaller than 1,000.

The size of the delegate body at 1,500 members is important because it represents the voices of the membership across the Movement. Despite the declines in membership, the delegate representation at the National Council Session is important to maintain at 1,500 delegates, respecting the decision of the 2008 NCS Delegates, and the importance of many voices.

Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Council

No expenditures are anticipated as the total number of delegates to the National Council Session will remain unchanged.

Recommendation of the National Board

The board does not recommend adoption of this constitutional amendment for the following reasons:

- Changing the formula is not necessary to achieve the objective of the proposal. The prescribed figure of 3,500 may already be adjusted by the board each triennium.
- The proposal assumes the 2008 National Council Session body intended to keep size as close to 1,500 as possible. If that was the intent in 2008, the proposal also assumes 1,500 is the optimal size today, 15 years later.
- The originating council does not anticipate any financial implications should the proposal be approved. However, mandating a size as close to 1,500 as possible will increase the costs for some councils who will be accorded larger delegate allocations.

The board is committed to hearing the voice of the membership and has included a discussion topic specifically focused on our democratic process and delegate voice on the agenda to reinforce this commitment.

The NCS Advisory Team does not support this proposal.

GSUSA records for the delegate data cited above show:

1,262 council delegates in 2011 – girl membership of 2,285,765 (9/30/2010)
1,250 council delegates in 2014 – girl membership of 2,143,623 (9/30/2013)
1,079 council delegates in 2017 – girl membership of 1,808,266 (9/30/2016)
1,287 council delegates in 2020 – girl membership of 1,674,945 (9/30/2019)
902 council delegates in 2023 – girl membership of 1,106,084 (9/30/2022)

D. Constitutional Amendment: Timing of Delegate Allotment

Girl Scouts of the USA National Board of Directors on Recommendation of the National Council Session Advisory Team

Proposal

THAT Article IV (The National Council), Section 5 (Formula for Delegates) of the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA be amended by striking “of the year,” and inserting the words, “two years” before the word “preceding.” If approved, the text would read as follows:

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
Each local council to which a charter has been issued and remains in force shall be entitled to the following delegates based on the number of girls under its jurisdiction who are members of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America as of September 30 of the year preceding the regular session of the National Council: a. two (2) delegates; b. one (1) additional delegate for up to 3,500 girls; c. one (1) additional delegate for every 3,500 girls thereafter.	Each local council to which a charter has been issued and remains in force shall be entitled to the following delegates based on the number of girls under its jurisdiction who are members of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America as of September 30, two years of the year preceding the regular session of the National Council: a. two (2) delegates; b. one (1) additional delegate for up to 3,500 girls; c. one (1) additional delegate for every 3,500 girls thereafter.	Each local council to which a charter has been issued and remains in force shall be entitled to the following delegates based on the number of girls under its jurisdiction who are members of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America as of September 30, two years preceding the regular session of the National Council: a. two (2) delegates; b. one (1) additional delegate for up to 3,500 girls; c. one (1) additional delegate for every 3,500 girls thereafter.

Rationale Submitted by the National Council Session Advisory Team

This proposal amends the Constitution to adjust the membership year on which delegate allotment is based. The change will allow GSUSA to confirm the number of delegates to which each council is entitled before any delegate election occurs, avoiding the need to conduct elections based on preliminary data and potentially adjust after receiving final numbers. The time when councils elect delegates is not affected by this proposal. In proposing this Constitutional amendment, it is the intent of the National Board to lessen the administrative burden on councils when selecting their National Council delegates.

Current Practices/Background

In 2020, the National Council amended the Constitution to require national delegates be elected in the calendar year preceding the National Council Session. Under the Constitution, the number of delegates

to which each council is entitled is based on membership numbers as of September 30 of the calendar year preceding NCS. Those numbers are not finalized and released until November 30. Since many councils elect their delegates at annual meetings between January and April (e.g., for NCS 2023, January–April 2022), they must estimate how many delegates they will have and adjust if needed after receiving their official membership numbers.

Timeline for 2023 NCS:

- Councils elected their delegates in the calendar year 2022.
- However, official girl membership numbers for MY 2022, were not available until November 2022.
- The councils who elected delegates January 2022 through November 2022 estimated their delegate allotment and elected a ranked list of alternates.
- When final allocations were known, councils adjusted their data, if necessary.

This proposal eliminates the need for preliminary data. If approved, councils will know their delegate allotment number before any delegate elections occur.

Financial Impact Statement Submitted by the National Council Session Advisory Team

This proposal has a positive financial impact by allowing staff resources to be focused on other initiatives.

Recommendation of the National Board

The board recommends adoption of this constitutional amendment which, if adopted, will:

- streamline the National Council delegate selection process;
- allow councils to plan for and select their delegates more efficiently; and
- use Movement resources wisely.

The NCS Advisory Team submitted and supports the proposal.

E. Constitutional Amendment: Council Representation on the National Board

Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta

Proposal

To amend Article X, Section 2 of the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA to insert “at least three (3) of whom shall be Council Executives.” After the words “members-at-large,” and to insert the definition of “Council Executive” after the word “country.”

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
COMPOSITION The National Board of Directors shall consist of the President, the Vice Presidents, the Secretary, and the Treasurer; and 25 members-at-large. The Chair of the National Board Development Committee, if not already elected to the National Board, shall be ex officio a member of the National Board. The Chief Executive Officer shall be an ex officio member without vote. The National Board shall at all times be representative of the various geographical areas of the country.	COMPOSITION The National Board of Directors shall consist of the President, the Vice Presidents, the Secretary, and the Treasurer; and 25 members-at-large, at least three (3) of whom shall be Council Executives. The Chair of the National Board Development Committee, if not already elected to the National Board, shall be ex officio a member of the National Board. The Chief Executive Officer shall be an ex officio member without vote. The National Board shall at all times be representative of the various geographical areas of the country. <u>Council Executive</u> A Council Executive shall be defined as a person currently employed as the Chief Executive Officer of a chartered Girl Scout Council, who meets the criteria for service as a member of the National Board. A Council Executive who ceases to be employed as the Chief Executive Officer of a chartered Girl Scout Council shall be deemed to have automatically resigned as a member of the National Board, and such vacancy shall be filled by a new Council Executive.	COMPOSITION The National Board of Directors shall consist of the President, the Vice Presidents, the Secretary, and the Treasurer; and 25 members-at-large, at least three (3) of whom shall be Council Executives. The Chair of the National Board Development Committee, if not already elected to the National Board, shall be ex officio a member of the National Board. The Chief Executive Officer shall be an ex officio member without vote. The National Board shall at all times be representative of the various geographical areas of the country. <u>Council Executive</u> A Council Executive shall be defined as a person currently employed as the Chief Executive Officer of a chartered Girl Scout Council, who meets the criteria for service as a member of the National Board. A Council Executive who ceases to be employed as the Chief Executive Officer of a chartered Girl Scout Council shall be deemed to have automatically resigned as a member of the National Board, and such vacancy shall be filled by a new Council Executive.

Proviso: This provision takes effect no earlier than the 2026 National Council Session.

Rationale Submitted by Originating Council

The purposes of this proposal are to (1) improve communication, transparency, accountability, and trust between the National Board, GSUSA, councils, and the membership at large and (2) facilitate better decision-making by the National Board with respect to Movement priorities.

The addition of Council Executives to the National Board addresses a missing perspective that elevates the experiences and needs of current volunteers, girls, and councils. While the National Board typically includes one or more individuals who formerly served as council board chairs, these individuals lack a real-time connection to the experiences of current girls and volunteers in our Movement, as well as the experiences of local councils. Council Executives would serve as advocates for local Girl Scouting to allow the National Board to better understand and prioritize initiatives that impact the member experience and address critical pain points like the national technology platforms (e.g., VS 2.0, GSEvents, Digital Cookie) that have hindered the achievement of strategic Movement goals. Council Executives can provide a valuable perspective to the National Board with respect to sensitive issues such as dues increases and gender expression and assist the National Board in better understanding how their decisions will be perceived at the local level. The addition of council voices to the National Board will facilitate better alignment of our Movement behind our national strategy in the area of operational excellence, which seeks to transform our culture, operations, funding model, and governance in visible and impactful ways.

Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Council

There is no financial impact to local councils or the national organization.

Recommendation of the National Board

The board does not recommend adoption of this constitutional amendment.

Council Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are critical Movement leaders, and their input, is essential to decision making and their input is considered as part of operational and governance decisions. Equally, we must respect that CEOs as operational leaders serve in a distinctive and different role than governance board leaders. The board is committed to hearing the voices of council CEOs and GSUSA has management routines in place to do this including monthly meetings with the national CEO, council alignment network groups, etc. The board believes there are more efficient and effective ways to gather input from councils to ensure that those with the most expertise on any given topic are provided with the opportunity to inform the CEO for operational issues and as appropriate, the board. The board actively seeks input from council CEOs, board chairs and other experts and will continue to do so by inviting those individuals to board discussions.

Adding three council CEO colleagues to the national board does not guarantee the purpose of the proposal is addressed. Improvements in communication and decision making (the cited purposes) must be more effectively addressed in our day-to-day work across the Movement. If existing operational communication and decision making is not effective to address today's needs, then the solution should specifically address this operational gap versus mandating a board governance change.

Further, this proposal implies that 3 of 110 council CEOs can represent all councils and their operational needs.

The NCS Advisory Team does not support this proposal.

Rationale For Proviso

The intent of the proviso is to establish the 2026 National Council Session as the earliest effective date of any amendment to this section to allow time for orderly implementation of this amendment should it pass.

- The National Board Development Committee (NBDC) plays a critical role in assessing the board's requirements for leadership each triennium. The NBDC's recruitment, cultivation, and assessment of candidates encompasses the talent, expertise, geographic representation, and diversity needed for an effective board slate.
- The slate identified for 2023 represents the last eighteen months of NBDC work.
- Council CEO representation would require the same thoughtfulness and consideration. Identification of an appropriate application and screening process for council chief executive officers (CEOs) is part of that process. If adopted immediately, three currently slated and thoroughly screened candidates who have agreed to volunteer for national board service and attend NCS 2023 would be removed from the slate and replaced by council CEOs who have not completed the same NBDC candidate vetting process.
- A proviso for a later effective date allows these important NBDC processes to be followed, delegates to be informed in advance about the council CEO candidates for the board slate, and the Movement to weigh in on any future process of nomination of the three CEO candidates to the NBDC.

F. Constitutional Amendment: DEIRJ Language Proposal

Girl Scouts of the USA National Board on recommendation of the DEIRJ Board Advisory Committee

Proposal

To amend the Preamble of the Constitution by inserting the words “and anti-racism” after the word “pluralism” in both places where that word occurs. If approved the text would read as follows:

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM Girl Scouts advance diversity and pluralism in our Movement and in the communities in which we live.	DIVERSITY, PLURALISM <u>AND ANTI-RACISM</u> Girl Scouts advance diversity, pluralism, <u>and anti-racism</u> in our Movement and in the communities in which we live.	DIVERSITY, PLURALISM AND ANTI-RACISM Girl Scouts advance diversity, pluralism, and anti-racism in our Movement and in the communities in which we live.

Proposal Summary

This proposal amends the Preamble to our Constitution to emphasize our existing commitment to “diversity” and “pluralism,” as Girl Scout values. It underscores our dedication to the work of anti-racism as a fundamental principle of the Girl Scout Movement and its sustainability.

Understanding that racism involves addressing institutional policies and practices of society that shape the cultural beliefs and values that directly and indirectly exclude communities based on race², the updated language will create a comprehensive approach to not just attract and *include* people of different backgrounds in our Movement (“diversity” and “pluralism”), but to actively work to dismantle the structures that preclude their full participation (“anti-racism”).

The amendment strengthens and updates the references to “diversity” and “pluralism,” while naming and reflecting the contemporary language, actions, and priorities of Girl Scouts to actively work in opposition of racist structures (“anti-racism”).

As we prepare to develop the leaders of tomorrow, our success will be determined by the ability to create pathways towards full inclusion and belonging across the Movement. Dedicating this line in our Constitution not only reinforces our anti-racist values but signals our sustaining commitment to this work and paves the way for girls in all historically excluded communities to be a part of this Movement. As we know, the structural barriers created by racism are the foothold and foundation for societal effects experienced by other marginalized communities. Within those communities, race is one—in many cases the primary—factor, in determining how individuals are affected.

² Anti-Racism Resources. (2022). Retrieved from Projects at Harvard
<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/antiracismresources/allies>

This amendment is urgent, timely, and important as it seeks to support the sustainability of decades long Movement-wide efforts made by our colleagues, volunteers, and Girl Scouts.

In proposing this Constitutional amendment, it is the intent of the National Board to codify in governing documents our commitment to be an anti-racist organization. In our Anti-Racism Pledge, Girl Scouts of the USA has stated:

We will do our part to dismantle systemic racism. We recognize that this is far from easy or fast work, but we are Girl Scouts—we believe in sisterhood, justice, and fairness—so we are in it for the long haul.³

Background:

As a century-old institution with traditions woven into the fabric of every residential zip code, we have a complex historical relationship of race and equity within the Girl Scout Movement.

In the early years of our Movement, girls and women of color faced the same limitations in our Movement as they did in the rest of society. Our troops were segregated until the Movement took a step in dismantling the system of inequity that existed for Black and brown girls in the organization.

The very first African American Girl Scout troupe assembled in 1917, just five years after Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low started the organization in Savannah, Georgia. It remained segregated until the 1950’s, when the organization made a national effort to desegregate *ALL* Girl Scout troops. This non-compromising attitude and commitment to that mission is what made Dr. King describe these brave young women as “a force for desegregation” in 1956.⁴

In the 1950s Dr. Gloria Dean Randle Scott served as the President of the Negro Girl Scout Senior Planning board and in 1975 she became the first Black National President of the Girl Scouts. One year later, 1976, Ms. Frances Hesselbein became CEO of GSUSA. Ms. Hesselbein served as CEO until 1990. During that time, she was a champion for inclusivity and diversity and the strength it brought to our Movement.

Throughout her tenure, Ms. Hesselbein spearheaded the creation of groundbreaking programmatic resources on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for the Movement. Partnering with the National Urban League, Ms. Hesselbein was able to engage consultants to support our diversity journey. She not only wanted any girl—of any background—to be able to find herself in our handbooks but took the work further to ensure equitable spaces so that girls of color felt included in every facet of the Movement. As a result of Ms. Hesselbein’s efforts, *membership for girls of color* tripled during her tenure as CEO.

Over the course of the next three decades, our equity work has continued. GSUSA and councils across the Movement have established diversity, equity, and inclusion teams, engaged in programmatic and process updates, and have provided staff and volunteer trainings.

³ GSUSA Anti-Racism Pledge

⁴ Ebony Magazine, March 9, 2012

In 2020, Girl Scouts responded to the call for racial justice in communities across the country by reinforcing that diversity, equity, and inclusion are valued by the Girl Scout Movement. Through [our Anti-Racism Pledge](#), GSUSA vowed to take action to support Black girls, their families, and their communities making Girl Scouting one of the first youth serving organizations to publicly commit to becoming an anti-racist organization. Our pledge then and now is to ensure all girls and their families have a place in Girl Scouting and our commitment to anti-racism will enable this.

In 2020, GSUSA formed a Board Advisory Committee and a Movement-wide Steering Committee, comprised of national board members, GSUSA staff, and Girl Scout council CEOs. This group is helping guide and prioritize how we embed diversity, equity, inclusion and racial justice (DEIRJ) in everything we do. Experts were commissioned to conduct a comprehensive audit of programs, policies, and practices as well as understand the Girl Scout experiences of members across the country. The results of this audit will inform our collective long-term DEIRJ objectives as we work to unite as one around this work. We have the opportunity to extend the work that has been done by each facet of the Movement and co-create a unified approach to which all members can contribute.

Research shows⁵ that organizations equipped with a wide range of voices and perspectives are better able to innovate, take risks, solve problems creatively, and turn challenges into opportunities.

Therefore, given the ever-increasing diversity of our communities, creating a culture that embraces equity through the lens of anti-racism will be vital for us to continue to exist, grow, and be relevant to all girls in the nation.

This proposal is the next step in our Movement's journey to achieving our highest aspirations as a place to nurture all girls and their ambitions. Our ardent support to advance diversity, pluralism, and anti-racism in our Movement and in the communities in which we live demonstrates our commitment to make the world a better place. In doing so, we take heed to our former national CEO's call to action:

"We must take steps to address these inequalities. I have worked my entire life as a passionate advocate for inclusion and diversity, and we as a society still need to change."

Frances Hesselbein

Leader to Leader Fall 2020

"Battling Racial Injustice"

⁵ Tsusaka, M., Krentz, M. Reeves, M. "The Business Imperative of Diversity." Boston Consulting Group. June 19, 2019

Financial Impact Statement Submitted By Originating Council

While this proposal does not have an immediate financial impact, future decisions based on activating our Movement's commitment to anti-racism may require financial investments that will be considered during the normal planning and budgeting processes.

Recommendation of the National Board

The board recommends approval of this constitutional amendment for the reasons stated above. The NCS Advisory Team supports the proposal.

G. Girl Scouts Gold Award Scholarship Fund

Girl Scouts of the USA National Board on the recommendation of the Movement Gold Award Scholarship Foundation Task Force.

Proposal

THAT the National Council hereby affirms the recommendation of the Movement Gold Award Scholarship Foundation Task Force to create a donor-restricted fund in support of Gold Award scholarships; and

THAT that in recognition of its importance, the existence of such fund shall be reflected in the *Blue Book of Basic Documents* in the Fundraising Policies section of the *Blue Book* (or any successor section of the *Blue Book* as may be appropriate from time to time).

Rationale Submitted by Movement Gold Award Scholarship Foundation Task Force

At the 55th National Council Session, held in October 2020, the National Council voted that the National Board should appoint a task force to study the feasibility of establishing a foundation to provide scholarships to Gold Award Girl Scouts scholarships, with such task force to report back for a vote on its recommendation at the 2023 National Council Session. More specifically, the National Council passed the following proposal:

THAT the National Council establish a task group overseen by GSUSA and 2 council representatives, that includes volunteers, council staff, GSUSA Board members, and GSUSA representatives, charged with examining the feasibility of developing a college scholarship foundation to benefit Gold Award Girl Scouts. The task group will report back for a vote at the 2023 NCS on the feasibility, recommendation, and timeline for potential establishment of the foundation by the 2023 National Council Session. All members of this task force shall be appointed by the GSUSA Board of Directors.

Accordingly, a Task Force of Girl Scout council, GSUSA, and Girl Scout volunteer representatives was convened to study the feasibility of a Gold Award scholarship foundation.⁶

The Task Force, to fulfill its charge, met from September 2021 through April 2022, during which time it examined the strategic goals of the proposal and the various legal, operational, fundraising, and programmatic aspects of establishing a foundation that could support Gold Award scholarships, as well as additional scholarship structuring options. The Task Force completed its work in June 2022 and delivered its findings to the board. As set forth in greater detail in the report, as a result of its study, the Task Force concluded that although a foundation would be technically feasible, a donor-restricted scholarship fund would be the most efficient and nimble way to support the goals of the 2020

⁶ The appointment and composition of the Task Force and its approach to its work is set forth in greater detail in the accompanying report from the Task Force. Read the full report [here](#) on the delegate website.

proposal, and recommended that in recognition of the fund's significance and to retain visibility of the fund, that the existence of such fund be reflected in the *Blue Book*.

After considering such recommendations, and to move quickly to further the impact of the Gold Award on behalf of girls, in September 2022 the board established a donor-restricted fund that is known as the Girl Scouts National Gold Award Scholarship Fund. All monies raised for such donor-restricted Girl Scouts National Gold Award Scholarship Fund are designated to be used for the development and support of a Girl Scout Gold Award scholarship program. The Gold Award Scholarship Foundation Task Force has also agreed to continue until the first annual report on the fund is provided to the Movement to provide assistance and implementation of its recommendations.

This proposal would affirm the desire of the Movement to continue to support Gold Award scholarships in this manner and would implement the Task Force's recommendation that the existence of the fund be reflected in the *Blue Book* in recognition of its significance.

Recommendation of the National Board

The board recommends approval of this proposal for the reasons set forth in the Task Force's recommendation.

The NCS Advisory Team supports the proposal.

Consent Agenda

Evaluations from the 2020 NCS as well as previous, in-person national council sessions and feedback from delegate surveys requested that more time be focused on discussion rather than process.

Acting on this feedback, the NCS Advisory Team recommends considering the use of a consent agenda. Similar to use by council boards and the board, a consent agenda would allow for several routine or non-controversial matters to be approved by a single vote without debate. Before that vote, items can be requested to be removed from the consent agenda by members of the delegate body. If delegates support using a consent agenda, it can create more discussion time for other proposals that would benefit from additional opportunities for discussion and debate. Delegate education about consent agendas and the proposals will help the board decide whether to place items on a consent agenda for the 56th National Council Session or follow the practice of placing each item for individual vote.

GSUSA and the board would like to thank everyone for their participation in this important governance process. As a governance body, our National Council represents the best of Girl Scouting—a group committed to considering our Movement’s future and actively shaping the way forward. We look forward to engaging in this important dialogue through the delegate website, delegate education sessions, at local council events, and when the group convenes in July 2023.

See you in Lake Buena Vista, Florida!