

Communication from the National Council: Fee Increase Talking Points & FAQs

(Please see Cradle of Liberty Council information – the COL executive board has voted to subsidize the fee increases indicated below for those members who are renewing their current registration for the 2020 charter term.)

For more than 100 years, Scouting has helped build future leaders by combining educational activities and lifelong values with fun and adventure in the outdoors. At Boy Scouts of America, we are dedicated to developing leaders of character by preparing young men and women for life by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. The timeless ideals of the Scout Law, such as being trustworthy, helpful, kind and brave, make up the foundation young people need to address and overcome challenges in their lives and the issues facing their generation.

Now as we continue the Scouting mission, it is important that we keep pace with an ever-changing world. While costs to the organization have increased every year, the Boy Scouts of America has worked to keep the annual membership fee as low as possible by subsidizing core costs, including liability insurance we must carry to cover all official Scouting activities. Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to subsidize at the level we have in the past, especially as the cost of insurance has increased dramatically. We kept the cost low to make Scouting available to as many young people as possible but keeping the cost artificially low for many years now magnifies the impact of changes.

To ensure we have the resources to fulfill the promise of Scouting despite increasing operating costs, the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America has made the difficult but necessary decision to increase the annual membership fee effective January 1, 2020 to:

- \$60 for youth members in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts,
- \$36 for youth members in Exploring, and
- \$36 for adult members

Every dollar of the national membership fee will go toward the cost of essential services, including liability insurance for those participating in approved Scouting activities, program resources, safety standards, youth protection and personal safety training, and services to councils nationwide to sustain Scouting. The National organization will also continue to develop and improve resources that support our volunteers and youth members such as online registration, Member Care and Scoutbook, which now includes the Den Leader experience to ensure the safe and consistent delivery of Cub Scouting; as well as improvements aimed at simplifying the annual renewal process.

Across the country and in our own community, we know that Scouting remains one of the most valuable investments we can make to support young men and women today so they can become the leaders we will turn to tomorrow. From once-in-a-lifetime adventures to merit badges that spark interests and future careers; from campouts under the stars to service projects that leave a lasting impact on our communities; Scouting's year-round program expands horizons and provides young people with a safe and welcoming place to learn, grow, and thrive.

That is why we are committed to ensuring that all youth can experience the character-building benefits of Scouting regardless of their financial situation. In addition to our existing council and unit membership assistance, we have established a national *Growing Future Leaders Fund*, which is funded entirely through donations, to provide additional financial support to those who need it.

FAQ

Q: Why are the fees increasing now?

A: While costs increase every year, the Boy Scouts of America has worked to keep the annual membership fee as low as possible to make Scouting available to as many young people as possible by subsidizing core costs, including liability insurance we must carry to cover all official Scouting activities. As the organization's financial situation has shifted over the past several months, it is no longer possible to subsidize at the level we have in the past, especially as the cost of insurance has increased dramatically.

Q: Does this apply to youth members and volunteers?

A: Yes, the new fees apply for youth and adult members. Effective January 1, 2020, the new fees are:

- \$60 for youth members in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts,
- \$36 for youth members in Exploring, and
- \$36 for adult members (includes cost of background check and *Scouting Magazine*)
- \$60 for unit charter fees

Q: Is Scouting still a good value?

A: Absolutely! While most extracurricular activities are seasonal, Scouting is a year-round program that remains one of the most valuable investments we can make to support young men and women today so they can become the leaders we will turn to tomorrow. For most of our youth members, the new registration fee amounts to \$5 a month, which is an enormous value when you consider that many seasonal extracurricular activities often start at \$100 for programs that last a few weeks.

Q: Does the fee increase apply to council-paid memberships?

A: No. The cost for council-paid membership, sometimes known as ScoutReach, will continue to be \$24 for each youth member.

Q: What will the money be used for?

A: Every dollar of membership fees will go to cover the cost of essential services, including liability insurance for members participating in approved Scouting activities, background checks for adult leaders, program development and training resources, continuously updated youth protection and youth safety training, improved IT/digital experiences and services to our councils nationwide.

Q: Is this increase being implemented to cover the cost of the additional background checks?

A: No, the cost of background checks is not the prompting the fee increase.

Q: Why is this being announced now?

A: We recognize the timing of this fee increase creates challenges as units have already begun collecting fees for their 2020 registration renewal process, and we would not make this difficult decision if it were not absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, the cost of liability insurance we must carry to cover all Scouting activities has increased dramatically over the past several months, and the organization is no longer able to offset the cost of insurance. We are committed to supporting you through this process and are making necessary adjustments to the online rechartering system to ensure units can carry out the recharter process.

Q: Does this increase cover financial challenges the organization is facing?

A: The increase was prompted because the cost of liability insurance we must carry to cover all Scouting activities has increased dramatically over the past several months, and the organization is no longer able to offset the cost of insurance. The national membership fee also enables us program development and training resources, continuously updated youth protection and youth safety training, improved IT/digital experiences and services to our councils nationwide.

Q: When will this increase take effect?

A: The new membership fees will take effect starting January 1, 2020 for the 2020-21 program year.

Q: Is financial assistance available?

A: We are committed to ensuring that all youth can experience the character-building benefits of Scouting regardless of their financial situation. In addition to the many existing council and unit membership assistance funds, we have established the donor-funded *Growing Future Leaders Fund* to provide financial support to those who need it.

Q: My council recently announced a new fee to cover insurance. Does this change mean that fee is no longer necessary?

A: No, the liability insurance that we need to carry for all Scouting activities at the national level is different from local fees that are collected to address local needs, which can include such as local property and accident insurance, as well as unique local programming costs.

Q: In addition to the national membership fee, my council is implementing a program fee. Is that allowed?

A: Starting August 1, 2020, councils can choose to charge a local program fee, up to but no more than the national membership fee – up to \$60 for youth members in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts; up to \$36 for youth members in Exploring and up to \$36 for adult members. The local program fee can include local insurance costs (i.e., accident, property, etc.), as well as cost to administer unique local programming efforts.

Q: What happens if my council's program fee is more than the national membership fee?

A: Councils that are currently charging a program fee more than the national membership fee have one year to adjust their fees in order to be in compliance with the new rules.

Q: What measures has the national organization taken to offset the financial challenges?

A: In addition to ongoing efforts to streamline and simplify the organization, the national organization has taken a number of steps in addressing its financial challenges, including the recent elimination of more than 35 positions at the National Service Center and ongoing consolidation of departments for the most effective utilization of resources in support of Scouting.

Q: Will the national membership fee continue to increase?

A: Although no decision about future increases have been made, the cost of operating our organization and services increases every year. Should it be necessary to increase fees in the future, the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America has agreed to evaluate the needs and make such decisions, whenever possible, at the National Annual Meeting in May or early in the summer so that they can be announced with as much lead time as possible to allow for councils and units to be able to plan accordingly.