



## Early Alert

February 2020

In October 2020, Girl Scouts from across our country and around the world will gather for the 55th 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 been brought together to represent their collective voices—to discuss and debate topics around the future direction of Girl Scouts, always with the girls we serve as the focus of these meetings. In fact, at our 54th National Council Session in 2017, nearly 28% of the elected delegates were girls. We have a lot to be proud of!

As we continue to prepare for our 55th National Council Session, this Early Alert outlines the items that will be placed on the agenda based on insights from local volunteers, council leaders and staff, national leaders and 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 G.I.R.L. 2020/55th National Council Session (NCS 2020) is to bring together the Movement to reinforce our shared commitment to girls and build a common vision and continued excitement for our organization’s future. We look forward to our triennial gathering later this year to collectively and collaboratively create a strong and vibrant future for Girl Scouting.

### Summary

The board has determined to place the following proposals and discussion topics on the NCS 2020 agenda:

#### 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

Girl Speak Out

This Early Alert describes how these proposals and this discussion topic were selected; provides more details on each, including the rationale by the originator; and provides the board’s recommendation on each proposal as required by the Constitution. The Workbook will be issued later this spring and will provide more information, including the order of the agenda.

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## NCS 2020 Proposal Process

Every council was invited to partner with the National Board in building a strategic and future-focused agenda for the 55th National Council Session in October 2020. All councils were given the opportunity to suggest topics for the agenda via a proposal and discussion topic submission process that took place from October 2018 through August 2019. The Office of the National Board received a total of nine proposals and four discussion topics from councils. A discussion topic was also received from the G.I.R.L. 2020 G-Team (G-Team). This is a 26-member all-girl team comprised of Girl Scouts from throughout our Movement, including girls from across the country, one Girl Scout from USAGSO, and one Girl Guide from Mexico; they have been contributing to all aspects of convention planning, including NCS.

For the first time, in 2018, GSUSA created a National Council Session (NCS) Advisory Team and invited councils to nominate individuals to participate. A group of eight representatives from seven different councils and USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO) were selected to provide guidance on NCS 2020, including reviewing proposals and discussion topics for strategic impact, making recommendations on how councils and GSUSA can prepare and engage delegates,<sup>1</sup> providing input to the National Board regarding the impact of proposals on councils and the Movement, and advising on creating an engaging and productive NCS agenda. The team includes current and former national board members and council board chairs, current and former council CEOs, and two governance interns from the G-Team. In addition to USAGSO, they represent small, medium, and large councils and the states of Connecticut, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Oregon, and Utah.

The NCS Advisory Team considered each proposal—the pros and cons of adopting it, what it would take to implement it, and additional information needed to make final recommendations. The NCS Advisory Team surveyed delegates via the Girl Scout delegate official website (Delegate Website) to seek input on concepts included in the proposals. They sought advice from subject matter experts, legal counsel, and parliamentarians. They worked with councils to gather input and feedback.

Further responding to Movement feedback, a subgroup of the NCS Advisory Team was created, composed of three members of the advisory team and three council CEOs (from California, Illinois, and Virginia), to explore the issue of dues setting in our Movement and whether additional proposals should be recommended to the board for the NCS 2020 agenda.

At the Board Chair/CEO Conference (an annual meeting of council and GSUSA leadership) in November 2019, the NCS Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup conducted

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<sup>1</sup> References to “delegates” in this Early Alert refer to delegates to the National Council, and not delegates to councils under council bylaws.

information and feedback sessions on all of the proposals that councils submitted, as well as considerations for dues setting in our Movement. All proposals and discussion topics submitted to the Office of the National Board were also posted on the Delegate Website.

The NCS Advisory Team submitted information, the extensive feedback it had gathered, and recommendations to the board for its consideration. After several meetings and substantial deliberation, at its January 2020 meeting, the board voted on the proposals and discussion topics to place on the agenda. This Early Alert provides information about those selected for NCS 2020. A separate memorandum will also be sent that provides information about the topics and proposals that were not selected for NCS 2020.

## **The Agenda**

### **Proposals**

#### **A. Establishment of a Task Force to Examine the Feasibility of a National Gold Award Scholarship Foundation**

##### **Originated by:**

**Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana**

##### **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 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.

##### **Rationale Submitted by Originating Council**

When the list of available scholarships dedicated to Gold Award Girl Scouts is examined, there are VERY few scholarship opportunities offered nationwide, no matter what college or university a recipient is attending. There are some local councils that have college scholarship opportunities for young women in their jurisdiction who have attained the Gold Award, but these are usually very limited in the number of recipients and the amount of financial help awarded. Certain colleges and universities offer scholarships to Gold Award Girl Scouts, but again, these are small in number and in the amount of financial assistance. When investigating the scholarships available to our male counterparts, the National Eagle Scout Association has a plethora of scholarships for the young men to access. As a national organization, we can do better for our Gold Award Girl Scouts. By establishing a task force to examine the feasibility of establishing a National Gold Award Scholarship Foundation which has the sole purpose of funding and awarding college scholarships to Gold Award Girl Scouts, we would be sending the message that we value what our girls have already accomplished AND that we are committed to helping them attain their future goals. If as a National Council we are thoughtful in how this scholarship foundation is created and funded, we would be able to offer a significant number of college scholarships to some of the brightest and most dedicated young women in the country. By establishing a task force to examine the feasibility of establishing a National Gold Award Scholarship Foundation to benefit Gold Award Girl Scouts, we would truly be upholding our mission to make the world a better place.

### **Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Council**

At the onset of establishing a task force to examine the feasibility of establishing a National Girl Scout Gold Award Scholarship Foundation, GSUSA would have the responsibility of providing the funding to support the work of the task group. Following the report back on the feasibility, recommendation and timeline for potential establishment of the foundation by the 2023 National Council Session, the foundation would seek out donors and develop other means to fund the foundation.

### **Recommendation of the National Board**

The board recommends adoption of this proposal.

### **Reason for the National Board's Recommendation**

Promoting the Gold Award and ensuring that Gold Award Girl Scouts obtain every benefit possible for this highest achievement is important. GSUSA and councils continue to work to elevate this honor. GSUSA has developed and distributed public service announcements about the impact that Gold Award Girl Scouts have on the world, and Gold Award Girl Scouts and their achievements are highlighted locally through recognition events, fundraising opportunities, and awards. GSUSA also has obtained funding from generous donors to enable it to award scholarships to ten National Gold Award Girl Scouts each year.

If the National Council believes there is interest in establishing a Gold Award foundation, it is important to create a task force to examine the feasibility of such a foundation. The NCS Advisory Team supports the creation of this task force. There are many considerations in creating a national foundation for Gold Award scholarships. For example, significant funding would be required for a successful foundation and the source of that funding must be determined, as well as the time and resources it would take to raise such funding. The task force would also analyze the legal, tax, and financial aspects of establishing a foundation, as well as a plan for the structure and oversight of this foundation. A task force can thoughtfully work through these matters to assess whether a foundation is appropriate, and, if recommended, develop a proposed plan that would be best for the Movement.

## B. Constitutional Amendment on Consistency in Delegate Terms

### Originated by:

**Girl Scouts of Central and Southern New Jersey and  
Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England**

### Proposal

THAT Article IV (The National Council), Section 7 (Term of Delegates) of the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA be amended by inserting the words, “shall be elected in the calendar year preceding the National Council Session and” after the word “councils” and before the word “shall”. If approved the text would read as follows:

<b>Current Wording</b>	<b>Proposed Amendment</b>	<b>If Adopted, Will Read</b>
Subject to the requirements of the preceding sections of this article, delegates elected by local councils shall serve as members of the National Council for three years from the date of their election or until their successors are elected, provided they remain the delegates of the local council which elected them; delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas shall serve as members for three years from the date of their selection or until their successors are selected, provided they remain delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas; members of the National Board of Directors and National Board Development Committee shall be members of the National Council during their term of office; those persons elected by the National Council shall serve until the next regular	Subject to the requirements of the preceding sections of this article, delegates elected by local councils <u>shall be elected in the calendar year preceding the National Council Session</u> and shall serve as members of the National Council for three years from the date of their election or until their successors are elected, provided they remain the delegates of the local council which elected them; delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas shall serve as members for three years from the date of their selection or until their successors are selected, provided they remain delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas; members of the National Board of Directors and National Board Development Committee shall be members of the National Council during	Subject to the requirements of the preceding sections of this article, delegates elected by local councils shall be elected in the calendar year preceding the National Council Session and shall serve as members of the National Council for three years from the date of their election or until their successors are elected, provided they remain the delegates of the local council which elected them; delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas shall serve as members for three years from the date of their selection or until their successors are selected, provided they remain delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas; members of the National Board of Directors and National Board Development Committee shall be members of the National Council during

session of the National Council.	their term of office; those persons elected by the National Council shall serve until the next regular session of the National Council.	their term of office; those persons elected by the National Council shall serve until the next regular session of the National Council.
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### **Rationale Submitted by Originating Councils**

Currently the majority of National Council Delegates elected from councils begin their term 6 – 7 months prior to the National Council Session. This allows little time for these delegates to become knowledgeable about their role, informed about the issues to be addressed, and educated about how business is conducted during the National Council Session. The delegate experience for these individuals is not ideal. They experience an intense period of activity prior to the National Council Session, return to their councils and report on that experience and then begin to develop concepts for the next National Council Session.

If all National Council delegates elected from councils began their terms during the year prior to the National Council Session the delegate experience would follow a more logical pattern. In the first year of their term they would become familiar with their role, constituency and issues or concepts to bring to the National Council by participating in the Proposal/Discussion topic submission process. During the second year of their term they would attend the National Council Session better prepared to address these agenda items. Finally, they would report back to their councils on the experience of and actions taken at the National Council Session. They would end their term by training their successors.

### **Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Councils**

This will have no financial impact on councils or the GSUSA. It is simply a change in timing for activities that already take place. Guidance on how to elect delegates in advance of knowing the exact allocation of delegates per council already exists and is implemented in approximately 15 councils. This proposal will make that process universal.

### **Recommendation of the National Board**

The board recommends approval of this constitutional amendment.

### **Reason for the National Board's Recommendation**

This proposal would improve the delegate experience and further the goal of delegate engagement. As noted by the originating councils, most councils currently elect their delegates to the National Council for a three-year term that starts only six to seven months prior to NCS. This is a compressed time period for delegates to become knowledgeable about their role and informed about the issues that will be addressed at



NCS. If the three-year term started earlier, it would allow more time for councils to educate the delegate body. It also will enable those same delegates to start their term during the time period when councils submit proposals, allowing them to help shape the proposals that they will ultimately be voting on at the National Council Session.

Feedback from a delegate survey hosted on the Delegate Website cited the benefits of having more time to fully prepare for the role. Councils also advised that this would provide more opportunities for delegates to engage in the planning process for NCS and to engage on the topics that would be presented. The NCS Advisory Team supports this proposal.

Delegate engagement throughout the triennium is a priority for the National Board. In 2018, GSUSA reactivated the Delegate Website to communicate more frequently with delegates and will keep the website active throughout the triennium. GSUSA has additionally hired a full time National Engagement Lead devoted to delegate engagement, facilitated a mid-triennium call with national CEO Sylvia Acevedo for delegates in August 2019, in which she addressed important topics for our Movement, and distributed enhanced toolkits for delegate selection and engagement to councils. Electing delegates early and at a consistent time across the Movement will allow for more engagement and sharing of ideas and information.

## C. Constitutional Amendment on Membership Dues

### Originated by:

National Board, on recommendation of the National Council Session Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup

### Proposal

To amend Article IX (Membership Dues) of the Constitution by adding as follows:

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
Every person accepting the principles of the Girl Scout Movement and desiring to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America shall pay annual, lifetime, or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America.	Every person accepting the principles of the Girl Scout Movement and desiring to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America shall pay annual, lifetime, or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America. <u>Dues are set by the National Council or the National Board.</u>  <u>The National Board shall implement procedures for communicating with and seeking input from Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates prior to any membership dues change by the National Board.</u>	Every person accepting the principles of the Girl Scout Movement and desiring to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America shall pay annual, lifetime, or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America. Dues are set by the National Council or the National Board.  The National Board shall implement procedures for communicating with and seeking input from Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates prior to any membership dues change by the National Board.

### Rationale

Given the relatedness of Proposal C and Proposal D, a joint rationale is provided. See page 11 for the joint rationale.

## **D. Adoption of a Procedure for Communication on Dues Actions by the National Board**

### **Originated by:**

**National Board, on recommendation of the National Council Session Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup**

### **Proposal**

**To amend the Credentials portion of the Blue Book of Basic Documents on page 26 following the Membership Dues and Procedures for Registration Section to create the following new procedure:**

### **“Communications Procedures for National Board Dues Changes**

Prior to any vote by the National Board to change membership dues structure or amount, Girl Scouts of the USA shall communicate with and seek input from local Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates on the proposed changes, intended use of the funds, and potential impact on the Girl Scout Movement. After action is taken by the National Board, there shall be a report to Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates of the decision taken and the impact of the dues change.”

### **Rationale for Proposals C and D**

#### **SUMMARY**

Membership dues are an important topic for our Movement. Proposals C and D are the culmination of many months of discussion, reflection, and input gathering from many voices on the topic of setting dues. Together, these co-created proposals represent what the National Board believes is a shared vision for dues setting that will best meet the needs of our organization, our Movement, and the girls we serve.

Within the Movement in recent years, there has been increased dialogue and debate about membership dues. As discussed more fully below, council leadership has expressed that it is important for the National Board to have the flexibility to respond to opportunities or challenges by acting on membership dues between sessions of the National Council. Council boards and the National Board have similar responsibilities to assess local or national matters, including identifying funding needed to grow membership and serve our girls. The National Board has, since the Movement-wide discussion at the National Council Session in 2008, acted on dues in a variety of ways, including voting to raise dues in 2012 and 2016, creating an extended year membership for girls and later for adults, and approving a lifetime membership promotional incentive for long-term Girl Scout volunteers and staff. These changes have enabled the organization to serve millions of girls with our impactful girl-focused and girl-led program and have increased engagement of girls and alum with Girl Scouts.

Council leadership has also expressed that it is important for the National Board to communicate with and gather input from the Movement on matters involving dues. Some have conveyed that communications and gathering input with respect to the increase in annual membership dues to \$25 were not sufficient and did not adequately consider the impact of the increase. Some have also voiced a desire for more information on the impact of changes. In addition, one of the councils in Alaska filed a lawsuit contesting the dues set by the National Board. That state recently interpreted our Girl Scout Constitution to reserve the right to set dues only to the National Council. The decision applies only in Alaska. While GSUSA respectfully disagrees with the decision, and other issues in the case continue to be litigated, it has added to the dialogue about how setting dues should work in our organization.

Given all of this, the National Board wanted to hear more from Girl Scout leadership overall about their concerns, issues, and views on membership dues. A Dues Subgroup of the NCS Advisory Team, including Girl Scout volunteers and council leadership, was created to bring together those important views. That group facilitated discussion and input from councils. Together with the NCS Advisory Team, it then provided recommendations that the National Board place proposals on the NCS agenda to affirm the board's authority to set dues and memorialize in our governing documents the requirement of information gathering and transparency when making decisions about dues.

The National Board agrees with the recommendations of the NCS Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup. Just as councils' boards of directors guide the councils, the National Board is elected to act as stewards of the organization and is directed to act for the National Council between the triennial sessions. This stewardship should enable the board to be nimble, especially when it comes to critical issues like finances, based on the requirements of the organization, changing circumstances, and the needs of girls and their families. The National Board continues to respect and recognize that our decisions must be informed by the Movement we serve and the insight of those who elected us. We believe these proposals balance those considerations and represent the best way for dues setting to work in our Movement.

Therefore, Proposal C is a Constitutional amendment that expressly affirms that both the National Council and National Board may set dues. At the same time, it mandates that the National Board must establish procedures to communicate with and seek input from councils and delegates prior to any dues changes originated by the National Board. Proposal D establishes those communication procedures, which include communicating about and seeking input on the proposed changes, the intended use of the funds, and potential impact on the Movement prior to the change, as well as providing for post-change reporting on the impact of the dues changes.

The following discussion provides background on dues setting since 2008 (with additional details in an Appendix), an overview of the feedback received through

dialogue with the Movement, and the rationale for why the board supports the recommendations of the NCS Advisory Team and has placed the present proposals.

### *I. Background*

Prior to 2008, membership dues were set during sessions of the National Council, which meets every three years. At the 2008 National Council Session, there was a robust discussion regarding the membership dues process and the need for the National Board to act on dues between sessions of the National Council. The National Board, noting its responsibility to oversee the organization's budget, take prudent action and respond if financial circumstances warranted action, explained that it would begin setting dues in between National Council sessions. The National Council could continue to bring dues proposals for vote at National Council sessions, and the National Board would continually review the financial stewardship of the Movement and also act on dues in between sessions.

In 2012, after significant deliberation, the National Board raised dues from \$12 to \$15. In 2016, after considering necessary investments, it announced another change in annual membership dues from \$15 to \$25, effective as of the 2018 membership year. The National Board created a \$35 extended-year membership for girls in 2017, a \$35 extended-year membership for adults in 2018, and a promotional lifetime membership discount for long-time volunteers as well as Girl Scout employees in 2019. Many of these changes were based upon recommendations and feedback from Movement task forces, and after the Constitution was amended in 2014 to enable the creation of different types of membership dues categories beyond annual and lifetime memberships.

A fuller summary of dues actions since 2008 is included in an Appendix as part of this rationale to provide additional background information.

GSUSA and councils have worked together over the years to drive membership, roll out strategic initiatives, and continue to make Girl Scouts the premiere leadership development organization for girls. Members have responded positively to the extended year discount (which worked as a retention tool to increase girl signups over the summer) and the limited time lifetime membership discount. Many have expressed that \$25 is a reasonable membership fee for the value Girl Scouts receive, especially compared to other youth-serving activities. The increase in dues funded critical investments in programming, brand and technology to sustain Girl Scouts in the future, including developing 105 new badges and 30 new Journeys, launching important research and evaluation tools, developing and scaling technology advancements with enhanced data analytics, improved volunteer tools, and Movement-wide brand campaigns.

At the same time, not all parties were happy with the \$25 dues increase. Some have expressed that there was insufficient collaboration in advance of the increase, given the

understanding articulated in 2008 that implementation of dues increases would be done in consultation with and input from councils. Some have also conveyed that \$25 dues create an adverse financial impact on girls in low income communities and put pressure on councils that subsidize these girls' dues payments. Some voiced that a more collaborative communication, education, and evaluation process with councils in conjunction with this dues increase would have been beneficial.

## *II. Input Gathering*

Given the increased dialogue, the National Board wanted to hear more broadly about membership dues considerations that are important to the Movement as a whole. Accordingly, the NCS Advisory Team worked with a Dues Subgroup with additional council members to provide advice and input. The Dues Subgroup had representation from small, medium, and large councils, as well as long-time Movement volunteers.

In November 2019 the Dues Subgroup facilitated several Movement-wide leadership discussion sessions on the topic of membership dues at the Girl Scout council CEO and Board Chair conference. The sessions invited council board chairs and CEOs to discuss their views, concerns, and ideas for approaches to dues setting. 203 Board Chairs and CEOs, representing 104 Girl Scout councils, attended the conference, along with 17 National Board and National Board Development Committee members.

A range of perspectives on dues setting and parameters was discussed. At the end of the discussion session, a pulse poll was taken to gauge the Movement's vision of the most important governance and structural considerations for dues setting in our Movement. The results of that pulse poll are shown below:

### Pulse Poll Results November 2019 Board Chair/CEO Conference

What are the most important governance and structural considerations in dues setting for the Movement going forward?

Consideration	Most Important N=191	Second Most Important N=185
National Board's flexibility to respond to opportunities or challenges by creating new membership categories, amounts or promotions in between National Council sessions.	50%	30%
Entire National Council Session vote	4%	2%
Collaboration with National Delegates and councils prior to decisions to increase dues and/ or change membership structures	25%	17%
Transparency and accountability for effective use of membership dues	17%	35%
Guardrails on amount and /or process for increasing dues	4%	16%

Participants in the sessions also submitted written feedback. Key themes arising from those comments were:

- The fiduciary responsibility of a board over financial matters, just as local boards have this responsibility
- The need for flexibility and nimbleness of a board's decision making
- Advance communication with councils is necessary to share business need and seek input
- The importance of the board making its decisions after seeking input
- The importance of advance notice to implement changes
- The importance of considering the impact on Girl Scout councils and the girls they serve
- "Stewardship" or other reports showing accountability for the use and impact of changes in dues.

The Dues Subgroup and the NCS Advisory Team considered this feedback and the key themes of flexibility, communication and input, and transparency. They consulted with other councils and some delegates. The team reflected on the various membership dues initiatives that have been introduced over the years and the impact on the Movement, the needs of the Girl Scout organization as a whole, and how we can all work together for the good of the Movement.

### *III. Recommendations of the NCS Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup*

Based on this input gathering, the Dues Subgroup and NCS Advisory Team ultimately recommended to the National Board that it initiate and place:

- (1) a Constitutional Amendment expressly stating that both the National Council and the National Board have authority to set dues, along with a requirement that the National Board establish procedures for communication and input gathering, and
- (2) procedures for communication and input from councils and delegates prior to changes and report outs on impact afterwards.

The National Board agrees with these recommendations. These proposals capture the key themes that have been expressed by our Movement: affirming the National Board's ability to set dues, while ensuring communication, input and transparency regarding the process. The National Board believes these proposals represent the best way for dues setting to work in our Movement. They encompass a collective vision for the Movement, derived after honest dialogue and consideration, that will enable our Movement to act in the best interest of our organization and the girls we serve. The proposals reflect a clear statement of our intent and ways of work.

The National Board – with fiduciary responsibilities over the affairs of GSUSA, including its finances – needs to continue to act on financial matters such as dues, which are a central part of the GSUSA budget, especially since the National Council meets once every three years. Girl Scout council boards similarly act on significant financial drivers for councils, such as the price of the council cookie box or council service or program fees, and may adjust other budgetary matters after consideration of council business needs. The National Board is elected as stewards of the organization and is tasked to act for the National Council between the triennial sessions. This stewardship requires the board to act on critical issues like finances based on the needs of the organization.

At the same time, the National Board knows that our decisions must be informed by the Movement we serve and the insight of those who elected us. Councils, as well as delegates, have additional and important perspective on how potential dues increases or changes in dues structure may affect local programs, populations, and council plans. The National Board, in considering dues changes, should get the benefit of their insights, and wants that essential information. The National Board has heard the feedback that communication regarding the most recent dues increase could have been better and commits to a better communication process. Proposal C reflects that commitment by putting a promise of communication in the Constitution.

Proposal D expands on that promised communication by setting forth details on the communication procedures. The NCS Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup recommended the aspects of communication that were important to reflect in those procedures: communication and input from councils and delegates on the proposed changes, intended use of the funds, and potential impact on the Girl Scout Movement. Further, councils were extremely interested in learning more about the results of the dues change. Accordingly, the procedures outline that GSUSA will provide reports on the outcomes of any dues changes. This could include results and analyses of membership pilots, use of the funds, changes to financial trajectories or membership figures, trends and more. This data driven analysis will benefit the Movement locally and nationally. In recognition of the unique perspectives of both councils and delegates, Proposals C and D include communication and input from both groups.

### **Recommendation of the National Board**

We believe that Proposals C and D, together, encompass a collective vision for decisions on dues that reflects good governance principles, with appropriate roles and responsibilities, and mechanisms for input from relevant stakeholders. Accordingly, we adopt the recommendations of the NCS Advisory Team and Dues Subgroup and recommend that the National Council support these proposals.



*Appendix:*  
*Background of Dues History since 2008*

The following history on dues-setting within the Girl Scout Movement is provided as additional background information as delegates consider Proposals C and D.

**A. 2008 National Council Session**

Prior to 2008, the National Council voted on changes in membership dues. In 2008, the National Council debated and voted on amendments to the Constitution that removed some procedural language requiring ballots when the National Council voted on elections and dues. In the Workbook materials on the ballot proposal, as well as during the National Council Session, the National Board discussed with the National Council that, to be more agile and better meet the needs of the organization, and as fiduciaries elected by the National Council to oversee the organization's finances, the National Board was going to begin exercising its co-extensive authority to set dues in between National Council sessions. The National Board indicated that it would make changes in consultation with and after receiving input from councils. The National Council still retained its shared authority for dues setting during National Council sessions. The *2008 National Council Workbook* stated the following:

**Dues**

The Congressional Charter and Article X of the GSUSA Constitution vest the authority to manage the affairs of the corporation with the National Board of Directors between National Council Sessions. Article V specifies the procedure by which any vote taken at a National Council Session on dues will be taken by ballot. The interpretation of the word "ballot" is explained on p. 50.

The practice of timing dues proposals for National Council action is slow and outdated. The recent custom has been to bring a dues proposal to the National Council approximately every six years. A more agile practice is needed to allow dues to be adjusted when careful analysis indicates this is necessary. As fiduciaries, National Board members are elected by the National Council to oversee the organization's finances and to act in the Movement's interest. Since membership dues are a significant source of revenue for GSUSA, the National Board will exercise its authority to set dues and will seek the input of councils prior to taking action. Just as a council board of directors might raise the price of a box of Girl Scout cookies after careful analysis of resources and trends, the National Board would make a prudent adjustment in membership dues based on sound financial research, and with input from Girl Scout councils in advance of any action.

The Congressional Charter provides, in Section 80303(b)(1), that the Board has the authority to act on behalf of the National Council. "To the extent provided in the constitution and bylaws, the board of directors shall have the powers of the Council and manage the activities of the corporation between meetings of the Council." (See *Blue Book of Basic Documents 2006*, pp. 33–35.) Article X, Section 1, of the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA affirms the authority of the Board referenced in the Congressional Charter to act for the National Council between sessions. (See *Blue Book of Basic*

*Documents 2006*, pp. 8–9.) While the National Board would be the primary dues-setting agent, the National Council would retain full rights, providing a check and balance to the process. The National Council serves as a check and balance in two major ways:

1. Members of the National Board are elected by the National Council, and, therefore, are accountable to the National Council.
2. The National Council retains the right to act on a dues proposal placed on the agenda for consideration.

**Note:** GSUSA is committed to seeking a broad-based fund development strategy and to reducing reliance on membership dues as a primary source of income. GSUSA will continue to partner with councils in generating and securing additional resources focused on membership extension.

This commitment is in keeping with recommended findings of the National Board’s Task Group on Membership Subsidization, formed following the dues increase approved by the 2002 National Council Session in recognition of the impact of a dues increase on council budgets. Constitutional amendments to create additional registration options to annual and lifetime membership (Amendment of Articles V, VIII, and IX) would potentially increase enrollment. Options might include multiyear membership, introductory registration, and family dues.

During the National Council debate on the Constitutional amendments, a motion was made to reinsert some of the language from the ballot and voting section of Article V, Section 5, of the Constitution so that the sentence that remained stated “Decision on membership dues shall require a majority of votes cast.” Delegates inquired from the floor whether the reinsertion of this sentence would limit dues authority to the National Council. Legal counsel advised the delegate body that it did not change the shared authority over dues that the Constitution otherwise provides. The body then passed the proposal.

## **B. 2012: National Board Votes to Raise Dues from \$12 to \$15**

In January 2012, the National Board voted to raise dues from \$12 to \$15, effective October 1, 2013 (for the 2014 membership year). The vote was taken and announced more than a year in advance of the effective date to enable councils to plan for the change.

## **C. 2014: National Council Session**

During the 2014 National Council Session, the National Council considered a proposal to amend the Constitution to increase flexibility for membership dues. A task group with council and GSUSA representation had sponsored the proposal after studying dues during the 2011–2014 triennium and concluding that the organization needed to be able to innovate and respond quickly to new opportunities. As set forth in the *2014 National Council Workbook*:

The Constitution of Girl Scouts of the USA references two types of membership dues categories—annual and lifetime. If adopted, this proposal allows future flexibility in membership dues categories and enables GSUSA, in partnership with councils, to align membership categories and dues with membership trends and needs. The intention is to introduce more general language to accommodate future categories of membership and dues.

The Workbook explained that the recommendation was for more flexible language to ensure that GSUSA's governing documents could "accommodate innovation and enable quick organizational responses to new opportunities." As examples, the task group suggested consideration of 16-month membership options for girls and adults, providing incentives or discounts for membership or family memberships. A council representative from the task group placed the motion, stating:

"While authority for the establishment of any future membership or dues categories rests with the National Board of Directors, recommendations will be developed via a co-creation process with councils and you, the membership, as we together seek to extend the benefits of Girl Scouting to an increasingly diverse communities of girls and families. The time is now. Your vote for proposal one, all three parts, will create flexibility in our governing documents. It will demonstrate pragmatic leadership and enable Girl Scouting to be responsive to emerging realities. Thank you."

The proposal was approved.

#### **D. January 2016: National Board Votes to Raise Dues from \$15 to \$25**

In January 2016, the National Board voted to change annual dues from \$15 to \$25, effective October 1, 2017, for the 2018 membership year. As with the 2012 vote to increase dues from \$12 to \$15, the vote was taken and announced more than a year in advance of the effective date to enable councils to plan for the change. The increase was intended to help GSUSA sustain and improve its leadership programs, implement digital innovations and technology to enhance the girl and volunteer experience nationwide, maintain services for 2.7 million members, and work to engage 59 million alums around the world. In connection with the dues increase, GSUSA granted \$4.9 million back to councils to assist with membership efforts for girls from underserved and underrepresented communities.

#### **E. April 2017: National Board Approves Extended-Year Membership for Girls**

Following the direction of the National Council to innovate and create additional types of membership dues categories and incentives, in April 2017, the National Board approved an extended-year membership option for new girls, to be effective May 1, 2018. This option enabled new girl members to sign up during summer activities and continue

through the entire next year at a discounted rate of \$35. It addressed a commonly expressed pain point around recruiting for a full-year membership over the summer (as required to participate in summer camp activities) when less than half of the membership year was left. The concept came directly out of the recommendations of the 2011–14 Membership Task Group and was further refined by an additional working group that included eight council CEOs and board chairs.

#### **F. 2017: National Council Session**

During the 2017 National Council Session, the National Council passed a lifetime membership proposal that changed the amount of lifetime membership dues from 25 times annual dues to a flat amount of \$400 and changed the discounted rate of 13 times annual dues for graduating girls to a flat discount of \$200 for young alums (anyone who was a registered Girl Scout member before the age of 18 and is under the age of 30 at the time of becoming a lifetime member). The adjusted lifetime membership dues pricing was immediately instituted following the affirmative vote.

#### **G. April 2018: National Board Approves Extended-Year Membership for Adults**

After further consideration of the \$35 extended-year membership dues, councils requested that the board expand it to new adult members as well. The National Board was able to act quickly to respond. In April 2018, in consultation with councils, the National Board voted to expand the previously approved extended-year membership for new girl members to include new adult members as well, in time for the same effective date of May 1, 2018.

Extended-year membership has been well received in the field. It allows councils to engage new members earlier so that councils can communicate and engage with them throughout the summer.

#### **H. January 2019: National Board Approves Lifetime Membership Discount**

In January 2019, to encourage engagement, grow membership, and acknowledge those with longstanding commitments to the Movement, the National Board approved a one-month pilot promotion on lifetime membership, providing a temporary discounted lifetime membership rate of \$200 during April 2019 for volunteers with ten or more years of service and council and GSUSA employees. For each lifetime membership collected during this promotion and thereafter, \$25 was granted back to the local council through which the individual registered to fund an annual membership for a girl from an underserved community in the member's local council. In the case of those registering directly through GSUSA, the \$25 was granted to the council associated with the zip code of the member's residence.

The April 2019 lifetime membership promotion was extremely successful: for the past five years, an average of 3% of volunteers with ten or more years of service signed up for lifetime membership annually, and during this one-month promotion, approximately

13% of them signed up. Of those, 2.5%—1,800 volunteers—did so on the last day of the promotion, nearly double any other day of the promotion.

## **I. Litigation**

As mentioned previously, the Farthest North Girl Scout council filed a lawsuit in Fairbanks, Alaska against GSUSA contesting the \$15 and \$25 dues set by the National Board. On May 1, 2018, the trial court in Alaska dismissed the case and held that the Girl Scouts' governing documents give the National Board the authority to set dues. On September 13, 2019, the Alaska appellate court reversed and interpreted the Girl Scouts Constitution as providing the National Council with the exclusive right to set membership dues. It sent the case back to the trial court in Alaska for continued litigation on other issues, which is currently proceeding as of the publication of this Early Alert. This litigation addresses only claims brought by one council in Alaska. Outside of Alaska, the National Board continues to believe in good faith that the Constitution and Blue Book as a whole provide it with the authority to set membership dues, as illustrated by the Movement's collective actions over the last decade.

## **J. NCS 2020**

The National Council session in October 2020 includes four proposals on membership dues. This is an opportunity for the delegate body to discuss and reflect on the dues setting process. Coming together through our democratic process will help us move forward as a Movement at this critical time in our history, when girls need Girl Scouts more than ever.

## E. Membership Dues Increase Restriction

### Originated by:

Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana

### Proposal

TO amend provisions in the Membership Dues and Procedures for Registration section of the Blue Book of Basic Documents p. 25, by inserting after “affiliation” and before “Girl Scout” the wording, as follows:

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
<b>Membership Dues and Procedures for Registration</b>  In order to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America, a person must register with and pay annual, lifetime or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America. This is done locally through the Girl Scout council of USA Girl Scouts Overseas committee with which she or he is affiliated or through national headquarters if she or he has no council affiliation. Girl Scout councils account for membership dues in the custodian fund and transmit to GSUSA within two months of receipt all monies received for membership dues. These funds are not to be invested by the council for the purpose of generating income for the council.	<b>Membership Dues and Procedures for Registration</b>  In order to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America, a person must register with and pay annual, lifetime or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America. This is done locally through the Girl Scout council of USA Girl Scouts Overseas committee with which she or he is affiliated or through national headquarters if she or he has no council affiliation. <u>The National Board of Directors must seek approval from the National Council whenever a planned dues increase will result in dues increasing more than a total of 25% in any one triennium.</u> Girl Scout councils account for membership dues in the custodian fund and	<b>Membership Dues and Procedures for Registration</b>  In order to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America, a person must register with and pay annual, lifetime or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America. This is done locally through the Girl Scout council of USA Girl Scouts Overseas committee with which she or he is affiliated or through national headquarters if she or he has no council affiliation. The National Board of Directors must seek approval from the National Council whenever a planned dues increase will result in dues increasing more than a total of 25% in any one triennium. Girl Scout councils account for membership dues in the custodian fund and transmit to GSUSA within

	transmit to GSUSA within two months of receipt all monies received for membership dues. These funds are not to be invested by the council for the purpose of generating income for the council.	two months of receipt all monies received for membership dues. These funds are not to be invested by the council for the purpose of generating income for the council.
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### **Rationale Submitted by Originating Council**

The most recent membership dues increase in 2017 came in at a rate of 67%. This increase, while financially advantageous for the national organization, posed a severe hardship for the councils. Since it is the responsibility of each council to provide financial assistance for girls in underserved and economically disadvantaged communities, the obligation for the membership dues for these girls falls upon the local councils. The councils are extremely committed to ensuring that Girl Scouting is available to all girls, no matter what their economic status might be. However, such an enormous increase at one time makes it difficult for the councils to provide the necessary funds for financial assistance, and may force some councils to decrease the number of assisted memberships available. This proposal would increase collaboration between the National Board and councils in two ways: 1) Allow the National Board of Directors to continue to determine the amount for membership dues; and 2) Affirm that any increase would not prove to be too burdensome on the members, families, or councils.

### **Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Council**

Although there will always be some budgetary impact for the councils when the membership dues are increased, this proposal would ensure a more manageable impact by allowing councils to set their financial assistance budget based on the assumption of a membership dues increase below a total of 25% in any triennium.

### **Recommendation of the National Board**

The board does not recommend adoption of this proposal.

### **Reasons for the Board's Recommendations:**

As financial stewards and fiduciaries of the organization, the National Board needs to be able to make economic decisions on behalf of the organization based on the circumstances at the time. Dues increases will be done after careful consideration of the need and impact. In addition, Proposals C and D will ensure that the board considers all factors and makes informed decisions in making dues decisions by seeking input from councils and delegates on the proposed changes. The NCS Advisory Team also does not recommend adoption of this proposal.

## F. Lifetime Membership Discount

### Originated by:

Girl Scouts of Connecticut

### Proposal

TO amend provisions in the Credentials/ Certificate of Membership/ Membership Requirements/ Lifetime Membership section of The Blue Book of Basic Documents (pp.25-26) by adding as follows:

<b>Current Wording</b>	<b>Proposed Amendment</b>	<b>If Adopted, Will Read</b>
Lifetime members pay \$400 lifetime membership dues at the time they become lifetime members; discounted lifetime membership dues of \$200 shall be offered to anyone who was a registered Girl Scout member before the age of 18 and is under the age of 30 at the time of becoming a lifetime member.	Lifetime members pay \$400 lifetime membership dues at the time they become lifetime members; discounted lifetime membership dues of \$200 shall be offered to anyone who was a registered Girl Scout member before the age of 18 and is under the age of 30 at the time of becoming a lifetime member; <u>discounted lifetime membership dues of \$200 shall be offered to anyone who is a registered member and has served as a volunteer for a period of 10 or more years at the time of becoming a lifetime member.</u>	Lifetime members pay \$400 lifetime membership dues at the time they become lifetime members; discounted lifetime membership dues of \$200 shall be offered to anyone who was a registered Girl Scout member before the age of 18 and is under the age of 30 at the time of becoming a lifetime member; discounted lifetime membership dues of \$200 shall be offered to anyone who is a registered member and has served as a volunteer for a period of 10 or more years at the time of becoming a lifetime member.

### Rationale Submitted by Originating Council

Instituting a second category of membership eligible for the discounted rate of \$200 would recognize the continued support and commitment to the Girl Scout Movement that such long-term volunteers have shown, and it would encourage volunteer retention at a time when many volunteers are beginning to phase out of traditional troop leadership roles.

Implementing a long-term volunteer discount will further advance strategic alumnae goals by making lifetime membership more accessible and attractive to



volunteers who may otherwise begin to leave the organization, by allowing them to solidify their commitment and promoting a broader base of support in local communities and councils. A larger pool of Lifetime Members will provide Councils with more links to communicate with adults committed to our organization while providing a platform through which Councils can encourage continued volunteer participation at the Service Unit and Council levels.

As volunteers reach higher levels with their troops, and are perhaps past the under-30 "Young Alumnae" category, they may want to take advantage of lifetime membership to show their support for the Movement. They are more likely to purchase lifetime memberships for themselves and/or their daughters with this more affordable option in place. Councils have a better chance at retaining those volunteers with 7-8 years of membership who are close to the 10-year benchmark; likewise, they may retain those volunteers with 12-13 years of service who may otherwise end their involvement with Girl Scouts when their troop graduates.

### **Financial Impact Statement Submitted by Originating Council**

There would be no initial cost to the national organization or Councils to implement this change; however, there is potential for some potential lost revenue to GSUSA.

Analysis of Lifetime Membership data during the special April 2019 promotion indicates a positive impact on the number of eligible volunteers who would take advantage of a discounted category. During April 2019 alone, more than 10,000 long term volunteers nationally took advantage of the \$200 discounted Lifetime Membership rate. Over the past 15 years there's been an average of 3,744 Adult Lifetime Membership sign ups per membership year nationally.

Based on current membership records in Looker, it appears that more than 88,000 volunteers have 10+ years of service, do not have an existing Lifetime Membership, and would be eligible for this discounted category. If even 10% of those eligible members opted to purchase at the discounted rate, the initial membership fees would equal \$1.76 million! GS-USA would see initial lost revenue from each new class of discounted Lifetime members' annual membership fees after year 9; however, there is no guarantee of retention year-to-year. In addition, if that upfront discounted Lifetime membership fee is invested partially in some sort of endowment fund, there might be an opportunity to recapture the future lost revenue that would begin in year 9. Over time, a long-time volunteer discount would be expected to broaden the base of Lifetime members, adding to overall revenue.

Another ancillary benefit that is hard to quantify at this time is the retention of girls. We know that many troops often disband because a leader no longer remains in his or her role. For those leaders in their roles for 6-7 years, the

anticipation of a discounted Lifetime membership at year 10, might give them the incentive to keep going!

We believe there would be a net positive financial impact to GS-USA and the Councils as a more affordable category would lead to a greater number of volunteers purchasing Lifetime Memberships. The change would also create a more accessible option for Legacy Giving from Service Units or Girl Scout families who may gift a Lifetime Membership to long-time volunteers.

We believe this would result in a net positive effect to the Girl Scout Movement overall due to the increased retention of long-term volunteers, and maybe even extend troop longevity, by creating stronger bases within local communities that support Girl Scouts and generating goodwill for the brand overall.

As this pricing level was already put in place during the April special promotion, we do not believe there would be any associated operational costs to make this a permanent membership option.

### **Recommendation of the National Board**

The board does not recommend adoption of this proposal.

### **Reason for the National Board's Recommendation**

The board agrees that recognition for, and retention of, our long-tenured volunteers is important. These volunteers are critical to our mission; the knowledge and commitment that they bring to our girls is immeasurable. Recognition for this important group is why the board authorized a special promotion of \$200 for Lifetime Membership in April 2019 for tenured volunteers and GSUSA and council staff.

Limited time offers are motivators and incentivize individuals to act. Generating more lifetime members benefits the Movement in so many ways aside from revenue: it creates a stronger alumnae network, creates access to a pool of amazing volunteers whose expertise can benefit GSUSA and councils, and solidifies a life-long commitment to girls.

The limited April 2019 lifetime membership promotion resulted in a surge of lifetime membership registrations. For the past five years, an average of 3% of volunteers with ten or more years of service signed up for lifetime membership annually. However, during this one-month promotion, approximately 13% of them signed up. Of those, 2.5%—1,800 volunteers—did so on the last day of the promotion, nearly double any other day of the promotion. Delegates who gave feedback on the Delegate Website agreed that targeted, periodic, limited-time promotions would serve to increase lifetime membership registrations. Permanently reducing the lifetime membership dues amount by half for 10+year volunteers would not create the same incentive.

The National Council also discussed and determined at the 2017 NCS that \$400 is an appropriate amount to contribute for a lifetime membership (for those other than young alum). A permanent 50% reduction of the cost for lifetime membership for volunteers with 10+ years of service would result in a reduction of revenues.

The board believes that keeping this standard amount and continuing to assess and, when appropriate, authorize limited-time promotions for this and other groups would be the best path forward in addition to considering other ways to incentivize, retain, and recognize our long-term volunteers.

## Discussion Topic

### Girl Speak Out

In preparation for G.I.R.L. 2020, the G-Team has been contributing to all aspects of convention planning, including NCS 2020. Two G-Team governance interns worked with the G-Team to propose a Girl Speak Out. The girls believe that having a forum to share their thoughts at the NCS provides a unique opportunity for the Movement to hear directly from girls who are National Council delegates about an issue of importance to them and how Girl Scouting can help address that issue. This falls within the responsibility of the National Council to give guidance to the board upon general lines of direction of the Movement and program.

The board agreed that hearing directly from the girls about issues of importance to them today was a valuable item for NCS 2020 and voted to place the Girl Speak Out on the agenda as the discussion topic.

The G-Team sought to gather information from girls about what was important to them. To narrow the focus from six topics to one, members of the G-Team, with the help of the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI), conducted focus groups in councils. The results of those focus group discussions were used to create a survey delivered by GSRI to a larger group of girls:

- 317 Cadettes (grades 6–8)
- 174 Seniors (grades 9–10)
- 102 Ambassadors (grades 11–12)

The girls ranked “positive mental health” as the number one topic, and approximately 88% of girls in grades 6–12 felt that it was “extremely” or “very important” for Girl Scouts to address this topic.

The G-Team will work to shape the topic, but the Speak Out will focus on how Girl Scouting has contributed to resiliency, self-confidence, and the ability to navigate day-to-day challenges, including social media expectations. Specific topic areas will be assigned to the G-Team so that a broad range of input and perspectives are demonstrated. Bronze, Silver, and Gold Award efforts that promote girls’ well-being will be highlighted.

Members of the G-Team, led by the governance interns, will facilitate the Speak Out. The G-Team will ask girl delegates to conduct discussions with girls in their councils on topics that have been identified per G-Team member. A discussion guide will be provided to prepare delegates/councils to hold these conversations and promote Movement-wide consistency in the conversations. The G-Team will request a report of the highlights of those discussions via a survey (with the assistance of the GSRI). The G-Team will come together to reflect and incorporate how its specific topic areas all contribute to and are part of supporting positive mental health. They will then compile a

final report of the discussions and share that information with the Movement during NCS 2020. It is anticipated that the G-Team will speak to different aspects of the discussion highlights, perhaps in a panel format.

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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. Our board looks forward to engaging in this important dialogue through the Delegate Official Website, at local council events, and when the group convenes in October 2020.

See you in Orlando!