To: Heart of Virginia Council Unit Committee Chairs, Chartered Organizational Representatives and Unit Leaders

Cc: Heart of Virginia Council Executive Board, Staff & Commissioners

Fr: George M. McGovern
Scout Executive/CEO

Re: National Membership Fees announced- effective January 1, 2020

Dt: Tuesday, October 23, 2019

The Heart of Virginia Council recently informed you that there will be a National BSA membership fee increase beginning January 1, 2020. Earlier today, the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America announced the new annual membership fees. The information below is provided to you as has been provided to us by the National Council.

Effective January 1, 2020 the membership fee at recharter in the Heart of Virginia Council is:

- $70 per youth member in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts
  - $60 National BSA Fee goes to the National Council
  - $10 stays with the Heart of Virginia Council
- $46 per youth member registered in Exploring
  - $36 National BSA Fee goes to the National Council
  - $10 stays with the Heart of Virginia Council
- $46 per registered Adult Member
  - $36 National BSA Fee goes to the National Council
  - $10 stays with the Heart of Virginia Council

What does the National portion of the Membership Fee pay for?

- Program curriculum development and safety standards development
- Training curriculum development
- Development of Youth Protection resources
- Conduct criminal background checks on all Scouting leaders
- Technology development and upgrades such as the new Cub Scout Leader Meeting App and Scout Book
- Insurance coverage- Costs continue to increase especially at a substantial rate for insurance coverage

Note- none of the National BSA Fee stays with the Heart of Virginia Council

The $10 Heart of Virginia Council Insurance Fee is collected, in order to cover the Council’s costs/share of providing Liability Insurance to over 11,000 youth and over 3,500 volunteer Scout leaders.

Families enjoy Scouting because of its high value and reasonable price. Even with an increase in the National Membership Fee, Scouting will remain significantly less expensive than most youth programs in the Heart of
Virginia Council, and certainly more impactful long-term.

National BSA will continue to take every measure to reduce operational expenses and the Heart of Virginia Council will continue to fundraise locally to support our program and provide assistance when needed.

The staff and volunteer Commissioner Service of the Heart of Virginia Council is prepared to help you. We strongly encourage that the Committee Chair, Chartered Organizational Representative and Unit Leader of your Unit attend your respective November Roundtable. Our Scout Council Staff and Volunteers have been working on ways to help your unit recharter and pay for the new membership fees. Among the suggestions in motion at this point include:

- Continue to sell Popcorn & Peanuts- “Raise more than you think you will need.”
- Camp Cards are available for unit fundraising.
- Units should determine if a quarterly dues structure for your families might be more convenient.
- Units should revisit your unit budget to make sure fees align with actual costs.
- Inform families now an additional fee will be due, and you will notify them in early November of the amount.

The National Council of the Boy Scouts of America and the Heart of Virginia Council are committed to ensuring that all youth can experience the character-building benefits of Scouting regardless of their financial situation.

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.

Thank you for your continued role in empowering a generation of future leaders of character through Scouting programs.
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 National BSA 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: The Heart of Virginia Council collects $10 at recharter to cover insurance in addition to the National BSA Fees listed above. Does this change mean the $10 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 Heart of Virginia Council 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: 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 $5.84 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.

*The Heart of Virginia Council does not currently charge a program fee.*

**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.