

# Changes Anticipated in Boy Scout Policies Concerning Sexuality

Maitlyn Healy and Emma Johnson, staff writers

2013 has already seen a few historical moments in terms of the movement towards homosexual equality. President Obama became the first President in US history to use the term "gay" as a reference to sexual orientation in his inauguration speech on January 21. Just a week later on Monday, January 28, The Boy Scouts of America, a 102 year old organization, announced a proposal to move away from its ban on gay members and leaders. The

board may lift the national ban, but the ultimate decision will be left up to each individual chartering organization.

In Minnesota, the Northern Star Council has had an inclusive policy for 12 years. While there has been support for this movement from many, such as gay men who used to be boy scouts and were denied their Eagle Scout due to their sexual orientation, there has also been objection. Because many BSA troops are sponsored and

supported by local churches, these religious organizations are surprised by this movement and are showing little support for it. Others opposed to lifting the ban include The Merck Company Foundation, Intel Foundation, UPS, and United Way, who all stopped their donations and funding to the organization.

Some Boy Scout parents are also apprehensive. They seem to be more concerned with gay leaders more so than gay members because they fear it will

lead to pedophilia, which the organization has had issues with in the past. There been months of protest about this issue as several Eagle Scouts have already returned their badges and awards to show their dissatisfaction with lifting this ban. There is a biannual meeting of the organization's national board in February where the issue is expected to be discussed. Changes in the policy will be revealed after that time.

## Defining Assault Weapons in the U.S.

Kim Dixon, staff writer

On January 16, 2013, President Obama and Vice President Biden unveiled a new proposal to curb future gun violence in America. Included in the four major legislative proposals and twenty three Executive Orders signed that day, the President asked Congress to reinstate and strengthen the 1994 assault weapons ban, which was signed into law by then President Bill Clinton, and expired in 2004. In its January 28, 2013 issue, Time Magazine reports, "More than a third of U.S. police departments have reported an increase in criminal's use of assault weapons since the 10-year federal ban on sales expired in 2004." Legislation to renew the ban has been introduced several times since its expiration but has been unsuccessful. In a January 17, 2013 article in The New York Times, Erica Goode proposes that one of President Obama's obstacles in the proposed new federal ban "could lie in the use of the term 'assault weapon' itself."

Under the 1994 ban a rifle was considered an assault weapon if it was semiautomatic with a detachable magazine and had at least two of five

other specified characteristics: Collapsible stock – which allows the gun to be shortened, Pistol grip – which allows the gun to be fired from the hip, Flash suppressor or threading to attach one – which keeps the shooter from being blinded by muzzle flashes, Bayonet lug – which is used to attach a bayonet, and a Grenade launcher – which allows a grenade to be thrown more accurately and farther than if thrown by hand.

According to Goode, Internet forum advocates of the ban argue that the assault rifles designation "should apply to firearms like those used in the Newtown, Conn. shootings and other recent mass killings – semiautomatic

rifles with detachable magazines and 'military' features like pistol grips, flash suppressors and collapsible or folding stocks" – similar to 1994 definition and the one shown above. Advocates believe these firearms were "designed for the battlefield, where the goal is to rapidly kill as many enemy soldiers as possible, and they have no place in civilian life."

Some in opposition to the ban object to the label of "assault weapon" to describe guns that "are routinely used in target shooting and hunting." They argue that the title belongs only to "firearms capable of full automatic fire" such as those used by the military and law enforcement. Opponents to banning such weapons



Smith and Wesson assault rifle  
photo via Impactguns.com

## President Obama Inaugurated for Second Term

Emma Johnson, staff writer

President Barack Obama took the oath of office for his second term as the President of the United States on January 21, 2013, four years and a day after his first inauguration. The inaugural ceremony began after performances by an elementary school chorus and the U.S. Marine Band, which were followed by the seating of first lady, Michelle Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and President Obama. The Vice President took his oath of office, administered by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, after the invocation given by Myrlie Evers-Williams and the performance of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. Preceding the administration of the President's oath of office is James Taylor's performance of "America the Beautiful." President Obama took his second oath of office administered by U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts, followed by the deliverance of this second inaugural

address.

President Obama's address began with a reference to the US Constitution; the President's opening lines were, "Each time we gather to inaugurate a president, we bear witness to the enduring strength of our Constitution." He later continues to encourage the people of our nation to come together to keep our free nation strong by stating, "But we have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action." The President has been said to have made history in speech by referencing gay rights. Shushannah Walshe with ABC reported, "President Obama made history in his inaugural address today mentioning the word 'gay' and the issue of gay rights." This was the first time this issue has ever been mentioned during a presidential inaugura-

tion. When asked about her opinion of President Obama's inaugural speech, senior biology student, Hillary Verrilli stated, "Though he was very well spoken, as always, I could not find a quote that was particularly moving or that stuck with me, but I did appreciate the central theme of unity."

The President's speech was followed by Kelly Clarkson singing "America (My Country 'Tis of Thee)." At this point in the service, Richard Blanco, a Cuban-American poet, delivered a poem about equality and the power of the American dream. Reverend Luis Leon gave a benediction, and Beyonce closed the ceremony with "The Star-Spangled Banner." Following an inaugural luncheon, the President, the Vice President, and their families participated in the inaugural parade to the White House down the famous Pennsylvania Avenue. The evening of the inauguration consists of inaugural balls that involve the Obamas, the

Bidens, military personnel, and other important members of the American government.

There was no shortage of support for the Obama-Biden administration at the ceremony. Despite the chilly temperature, there were hundreds of thousands of people gathered in the National Mall to witness him take the oath of office for the second time. The President himself also seemed to cherish the day. As noted in an ABC News article by Michael Falcone, as he was exiting the platform, President Obama turned back around and looked over the crowd in the National Mall. He was heard saying, "I want to take a look one more time. I'm not going to see this again." We wish the President and the Vice President a successful second term.