

---

# BARBARA DITTRICH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 99<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



**Assembly Committee on Education  
Rep. Dittrich Testimony on Assembly Bill 9  
June 12, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Education for hearing Assembly Bill 9 (AB 9) today. This legislation ensures that youth civic organizations can have the best chance at recruiting members.

Organizations like the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the United States of America, and others provide a fulfilling life experiences and valuable learning opportunities to be successful members of society. The future of these organizations depend on recruiting new members, but the numbers are not where they need to be.

These organizations have especially struggled to recruit new members in the years since the COVID-19 shutdowns of 2020. A 2021 Associated Press article reports that the Boy Scouts of America membership dropped from 1.97 million in 2019 to just 760,000 in 2021. The Girl Scouts saw a similar decline from roughly 1.4 million to just over 1 million from 2019 to 2020.

Many schools in Wisconsin prohibit or significantly restrict outreach efforts of these organizations throughout the state. AB 9 provides these federally chartered youth organizations an opportunity to provide information and recruit members during the school year.

Concerns may be raised on how this removes local control from school boards across Wisconsin. This legislation was crafted to allow the school to determine when these organizations are allowed in the schools, ensuring they still have a say as to what goes on in their schools.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions for the committee.



---

# RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

---

STATE SENATOR • 19<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education*

*Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara*

*June 12, 2025*

Hello, members of the Assembly Committee on Education. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 9, a bill that would allow certain federally chartered youth organizations access to our schools for the purposes of recruitment. More specifically, this impacts Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Boy Scouts of America, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Future Farmers of America, and Girl Scouts of America.

Groups such as these offer young people incredibly enriching educational life experiences. The preservation of these fundamental organizations hinges on access to school activities, student outreach, and community events.

Unfortunately, in certain communities, student outreach in schools has been denied to organizations such as the Boy Scouts due to varying restrictions imposed by local school districts. This severely impacts the recruitment efforts of these organizations, sometimes slashing recruitment by half for certain chapters. This hinders the organization's recruitment effort and it prevents students from even learning about the various experiences they offer.

This bill wants to change that. Rather than certain federally chartered organizations being denied or granted access to schools depending on each district's policy, this bill will allow that limited list of organizations to provide recruitment and other information once each school year.

To apply further safeguards, the bill applies to organizations only if they are chartered by the federal government and are a youth organization, have an educational purpose, and promote civic involvement.

I am hopeful you will support this important bill allowing kids to learn more about what these amazing organizations have to offer.



# WISCONSIN REPORT TO THE STATE



LEARNING • ADVENTURE • LEADERSHIP • SERVICE



# 2024

The Scouting America program is an ongoing adventure that teaches a powerful set of real-life skills and develops fundamental qualities that help its **22,850** youth members in Wisconsin become Prepared for Life. ®

The Scouting America program will prepare every eligible youth in Wisconsin to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the scout oath and scout law.



## THE SCOUTING PROGRAM IN WISCONSIN INCLUDES

- 502** Cub Scout Packs
- 565** Scouts BSA Troops
- 56** Venturing Crews
- 11,768** Adults serving as Scout leaders

## WISCONSIN COUNCIL LOCATIONS



### LEARNING FOR LIFE

UPLIFTING STUDENTS • BUILDING CHARACTER • DEFINING LEADERSHIP

### PREPARED. FOR. LEARNING.

### EXPLORING™

DISCOVER YOUR FUTURE

297 youth participate in Learning for Life groups and there are 32 Explorer Posts. Career education programs are provided through Learning for Life.

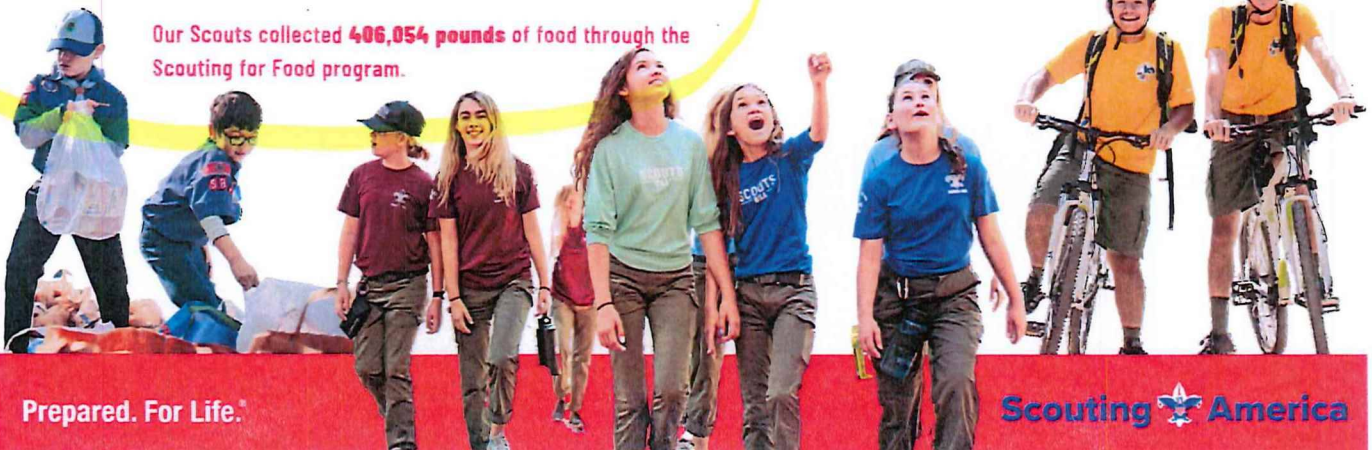
### PREPARED. FOR. SERVICE.

Wisconsin Scouts officially recorded **201,214 hours** of service to their communities in 2024, at a value of more than **\$6 million**, including **103,470 hours** on Eagle projects.

Our Scouts collected **406,054 pounds** of food through the Scouting for Food program.

### PREPARED. FOR. LEADERSHIP.

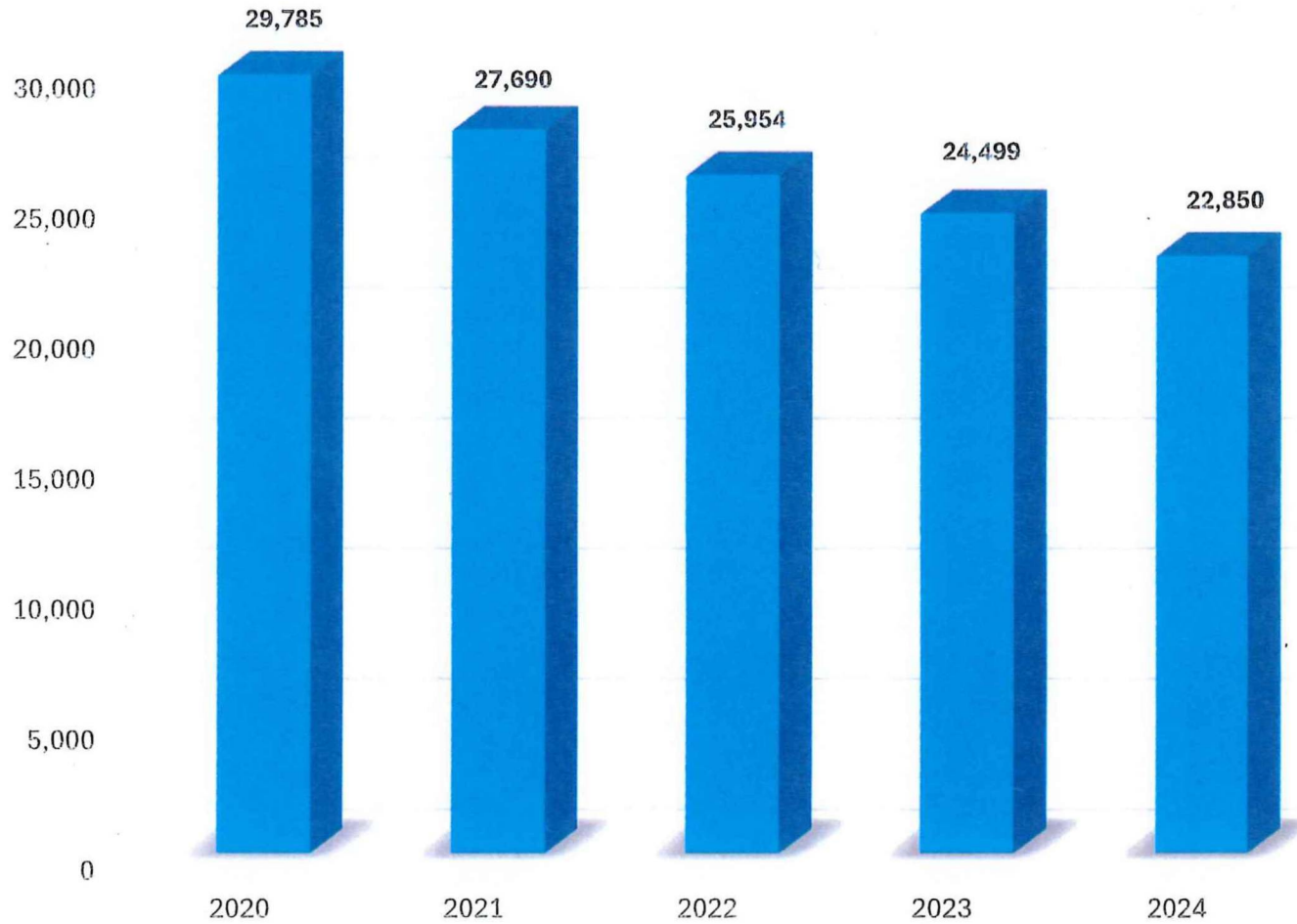
**655 Scouts** in Wisconsin earned the Eagle Scout Award.

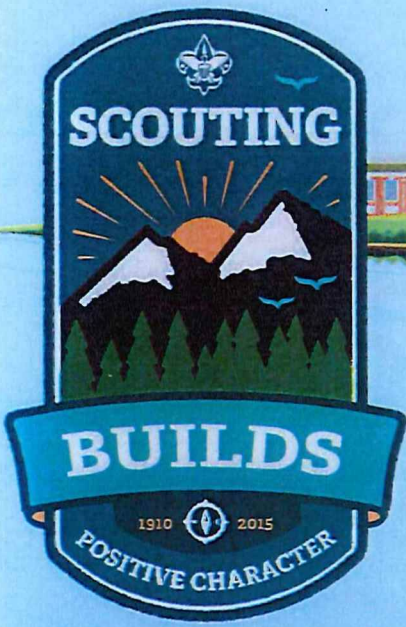


Prepared. For Life.®

Scouting America

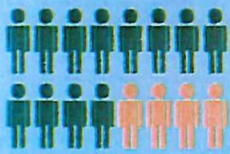
# Wisconsin Youth Membership





## DOES SCOUTING WORK?

We all know Scouting's goal is to prepare young people for life, but does it work? Scouting was put to the test over the course of three years, when a research team from Tufts University worked with the Boy Scouts of America's Cradle of Liberty Council to measure the character attributes of both Scouts and non-Scouts — all with a goal of better understanding the character development of youth as it was happening. The project, which was funded by the John Templeton Foundation and led by Dr. Richard M. Lerner, surveyed nearly 1,800 Cub Scouts and nearly 400 non-Scouts under age 12 using both interviews and survey data. **In the beginning, there were no significant differences in character attributes between the two groups. By the end, however, the differences were striking in several areas:**



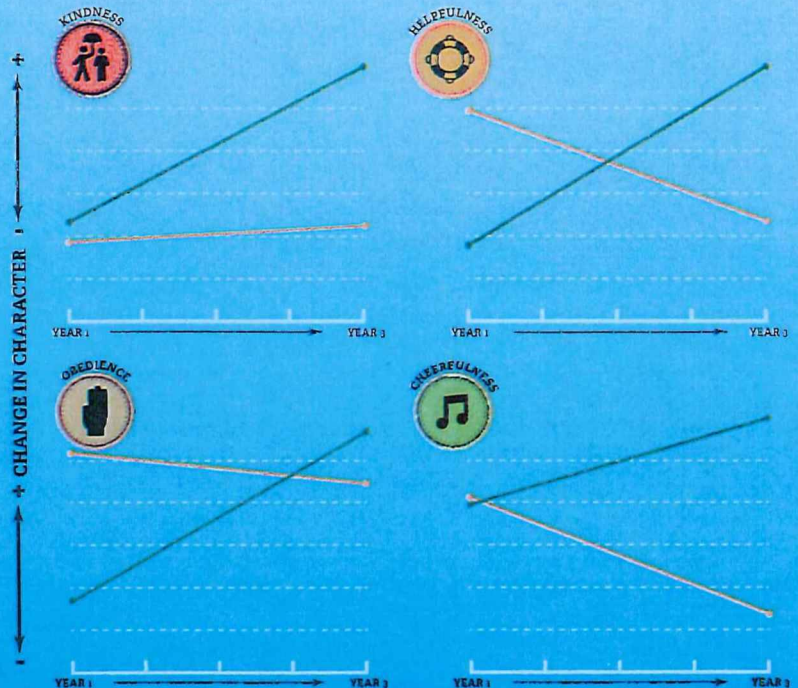
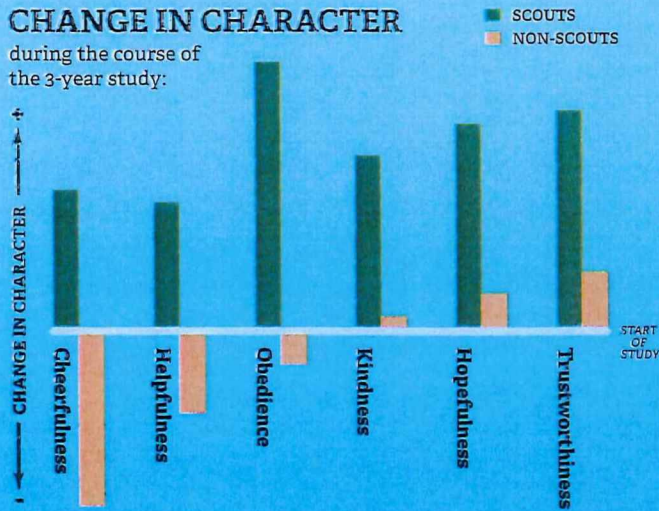
**2,000+**  
Scouts and non-Scouts  
aged 6-12 from across the  
Philadelphia area were  
measured in 6 key areas:



\* Hopeful Future Expectations

## CHANGE IN CHARACTER

during the course of  
the 3-year study:



### KEY FINDINGS:

- The more time kids spend in Scouting, the better the outcomes in character development
- Those who attend meetings regularly report higher outcomes virtually across the board when compared to Scouts with lower attendance
- Scouts are more likely to embrace positive social values than non-Scouts
- Scouts who are more engaged in the program report higher outcomes in nearly every category

With fun and discovery at every turn, Scouting makes the most of right now. But what's more, it builds positive character and provides young people a foundation they can stand on to embrace opportunity, overcome obstacles, and make new discoveries.

**SCOUTING WORKS.**



122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703  
PHONE: 608-257-2622 • TOLL-FREE: 833-320-5333  
FAX: 608-257-8386 • WEBSITE: WASB.ORG

DANIEL M. ROSSMILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education**  
**From: David Martin, Government Relations Specialist**  
**Date: June 12, 2025**  
**Re: Opposition to Assembly Bill 9, allowing representatives of certain federally chartered youth membership organizations to provide information to pupils on public school property.**

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing Wisconsin public school boards.

Our provided testimony is in opposition to Assembly Bill 9, which would require public schools to grant access to certain federally chartered youth organizations for recruitment purposes. The bill specifically applies to the following five federally chartered organizations: Boy Scouts of America (*now named Scouting America*), Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Boys & Girls Club of America, Big Brothers – Big Sisters of America, and Future Farmers of America (*now named National FFA Organization*).

To clarify, our opposition to this bill is not because our organization or Wisconsin school boards have negative views of these groups. The listed organizations appear in Title 36 of the U.S. Code as “Patriotic and National Organizations”, which is an appropriately named section. These groups provide our nation’s youth with invaluable skills, resources, and chances for growth. However, while their goals and aims are certainly laudable, our school districts may find themselves in violation of federal law if they were to admit these groups while denying others.

According to **20 U.S. Code Chapter 70 § 7905**, otherwise known as the ***Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act***:

*“no public elementary school, public secondary school, local educational agency, or State educational agency that has a designated open forum or a limited public forum and that receives funds made available through the Department shall deny equal access or a fair opportunity to meet to, or discriminate against, any group officially affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America, or any other youth group listed in title 36 (as a patriotic society)”. [Title 36 contains 94 different organizations]*

*“an elementary school or secondary school has a limited public forum whenever the school involved grants an offering to, or opportunity for, one or more outside youth or community groups to meet on school premises or in school facilities before or after the hours during which attendance at the school is compulsory”*

Furthermore, schools admitting one of the limited number of groups listed in the bill could face compliance issues with **20 U.S. Code Chapter 52 §4071**, otherwise known as the ***Equal Access Act***.

*“any public secondary school that receives federal funds and creates a limited open forum by allowing one or more noncurricular student groups to meet on its premises during noninstructional time. Schools meeting these criteria are forbidden to prevent access or deny fair opportunity to students who wish to hold meetings on school grounds.”*

While we appreciate the recognition from the authors that schools should not be forced to open the doors to every organization or to interrupt instructional time, current federal law would prevent these admirable intentions from becoming reality. By following this proposed state law and admitting the five listed groups, schools are creating a “limited public forum”. School officials who deny other groups that are determined not to be in the best interests of the community, or simply because of capacity issues, may find themselves subject to legal action stemming from federal law.

Beyond the reasoning that school districts may find themselves contending with federal law should this legislation pass, it is our strong belief that **local school boards and local school leaders are the best equipped individuals to make these determinations**. Local elected officials work consistently with their communities, parents, and local businesses to ensure that they are both responsive to and reflective of the values of their constituents. Districts or individual schools that choose not to admit any outside groups have arrived at that decision after experiencing difficulties in past dealings with public forums or individual groups, or their community has placed its priorities in focusing on academic outcomes. School districts are also well positioned to assist their community organizations in a multitude of ways beyond wholesale building admittance. Such opportunities might include after-hours facilities use, community activity web pages, or “flyer” forums.

For the above-mentioned reasons of compliance with federal law and the maintenance of local control, WASB is opposed to Assembly Bill 9. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation. It is our goal to work with the legislature to find ways to solve problems that maintain our states long valued tradition of local control.