

FAQs for Special 57th National Council Session

Why did the National Board recommend increasing membership dues?

The National Board's recommendation to increase membership dues and call for a special session followed a year of discussions and gathering input from councils and delegates on our Movement strategy. This strategy has been informed by research, including clear expectations around what today's girls and families most want and need, and input from stakeholders across the Movement.

This increase allows the funding of critical services that support the Girl Scout Movement - sustaining and developing exceptional leadership programs, implementing digital innovations and new technologies to enhance girl and volunteer experiences nationwide, and supporting councils through services and investments.

As a youth-serving organization, Girl Scouts must constantly examine how it is meeting the needs of its customers. GSUSA is committed to delivering best-in-class services and support for all councils and to providing thousands of volunteers with the relevant resources, tools, and training they need to best serve today's girls.

Was consideration given to how many members would be lost due to this membership dues increase?

GSUSA considered the impact of a potential membership decline as well as our ability to attract more girls and their families based on the investments we can make in the Movement. They also considered how membership would trend if we did not increase membership dues. Given the many years of steady membership decline before the pandemic and weak gains in recent years, we cannot continue the status quo of operating with a deficit budget and an inability to invest in priorities to better serve girls, volunteers, and councils.

Why did the National Board create two separate proposals for increasing membership dues for girls versus adults?

Local council leaders, delegate input, and the favorable sentiment expressed during delegate sessions in the summer of 2024 prompted the National Board to create a separate proposal for adult membership dues. Delegates and councils asked to consider a lower adult price that recognizes the value adult volunteers bring to our Movement, while still providing an increase in dues revenue that will enable the investments needed to execute our Movement strategy and better engage and support our current and future adult members.

Does this mean we won't have another membership dues increase for many years?

As all organizations do, we must regularly review our financial and membership models. To continue to maintain our core programming and make the necessary investments to provide an unparalleled experience for our current and future members and volunteers, we routinely need to reevaluate how we fund our mission.

Will the increase affect the membership dues for lifetime members?

No. Lifetime Membership will remain the same.

Will there be an extended year membership as we have had in the past?

GSUSA is determining the cost of the extended year membership and will contact councils in the near future with this cost.

Will the membership dues change each year?

The annual membership dues are determined by GSUSA's National Board of Directors and there is no current plan for additional increases.

Is Girl Scouting still a good value?

Absolutely! As the first and largest girl-led organization in the world, ***a Girl Scout membership is one of the most valuable investments anyone can make in a girl's life.*** This increase not only brings the cost of joining Girl Scouts more in line with the exceptional value of its programming and the unique leadership opportunities for girls not available through any other organization, but it is in line with similar organizations like Boy Scouts of America and is still far less expensive than the average YMCA membership, sports league or performance academy.

How will this increase help girls?

The additional funding received through membership dues will support our vision to serve as many girls who want to be Girl Scouts as possible—regardless of their means, neighborhood, or family background.

With enhanced program experiences in STEM, entrepreneurship, outdoor, and life skills, girls are empowered to lead and succeed in the industries of tomorrow. At the same time, they also help improve their communities, develop their own advocacy and service projects, and tackle local and global issues such as poverty, illiteracy, and the environment.

It will also enable us to develop and implement digital innovations and technology-like our Digital Cookie Program—to enhance the girl experience and provide a safe digital space for girls to share, explore, connect, and learn.

How will this increase help volunteers?

The additional funding received through membership dues will help us ensure that volunteers - the critical ingredient to the success of our mission - receive the support and resources they need to deliver a high-quality Girl Scout experience to even more girls.

Significant investments are being made to advance the resources, training, and technology needed to deliver an exceptional girl and volunteer experience. From streamlining the recruitment process and reducing the number of girls on waiting lists to the continued development of our digital Volunteer Toolkit which makes maintaining a troop easier than ever allowing more time spent with the girls and less time on administrative tasks.

Will financial assistance be available?

Yes! We are committed to making Girl Scouts accessible to all girls and, therefore, financial assistance will continue to be available to qualifying families.

Why can't philanthropy dollars just cover what a dues increase would?

Philanthropy alone will not provide the resources needed to make the crucial investments in our girls and volunteers needed to propel us into the future. Although it is an important element, it simply will not get us there.

If we do not take on these initiatives that our Girl Scouts, volunteers, and delegates are asking for, we will be unable to deliver a best-in-class experience for our current girls and volunteers, nor will we grow our membership. Investment in these initiatives will deliver many times the value to our girls and volunteers in terms of experiences and our ability to serve more girls.

Is GSUSA financially stable?

Yes. GSUSA has a strong balance sheet and a healthy level of reserves. However, the reality is that—in concert with our board—GSUSA has had to utilize, and continues to utilize, reserves in a responsible manner to ensure that our service portfolio is properly maintained and, where needed, improved. This approach lacks sustainability, and we must drive changes to enable longer-term Movement financial health.

To carry out the work that our volunteers, council leadership, and GSUSA know is critical not just for our current Girl Scouts but also for the future of our Movement, we need to invest in initiatives that advance our strategic objectives and core capabilities.

Reexamining our financial models and membership pricing is a responsible fiduciary decision. All organizations review their pricing structure on a regular basis as we are doing now.

We know the right thing for our Movement is to make these important decisions for and with our councils, including investing in these crucial initiatives together through national philanthropy and membership dues.

How do our membership dues compare with other youth-serving organizations, such as Scouting America?

A comparison with other similar organizations showed that most peer organizations raised their national dues since 2019, and some considerably: Scouting America (formerly BSA) to \$85, American Heritage Girls to \$60, and Frontier Girls to \$35.

Our current dues do not reflect the value that Girl Scouting offers. A membership dues increase would bring the cost of Girl Scout membership more in line with similar organizations, reflect our value, support our Movement's transformational initiatives, and enable future growth.

What is a special session and why did you hold one

A special session can be called by the National Board or National Council delegates to discuss and take action on matters between regular meetings of the National Council. A special session does not replace a regular NCS. During a special session, only the business included in the call to a meeting can be discussed.

On July 25, 2024, the National Board voted to hold a virtual special session to discuss a potential membership dues increase beyond the National Board's authority to approve (25% or \$6.25). This special session—the first one to be held since GSUSA was congressionally chartered in 1950—took place on October 19, 2024.

Why did you hold it virtually?

At the 56th National Council Session in 2023, delegates approved a proposal to amend the constitution to allow special sessions to be held virtually. The proposal recognized that improvements in technology enabled the National Council to convene virtually as needed to conduct the business of the Movement. Holding special sessions virtually is a more efficient and less resource-intensive way to conduct a meeting for a defined purpose. However, we do not intend for virtual meetings to replace our triennial in-person National Council Sessions.

Does this special session impact any plans for the National Council Session that will be held at the 2026 Girl Scout Convention in Washington, DC?

No. The National Council will still meet as planned as part of the 2026 Girl Scout Convention in Washington, DC. That session will now be known as the 58th National Council Session.

Why hold a special National Council Session? Why not wait until 2026?

We have engaged with delegates on the exciting opportunities to better serve our current members and future Girl Scouts through the development of our Movement strategy. We cannot deliver these benefits with the resources that are currently available. A Girl Scout is only five years old—or 15 years old—once. For every year we delay in meeting the needs of girls and their families, a new group of girls misses out on the life-changing Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Our members, councils, and volunteers need notice to prepare for a membership dues change, and an increase does not become effective immediately. Members begin joining in April for the upcoming membership year. If we were to wait to act until the National Council Session in July 2026, the new rate of membership dues would not be effective until April 2027. This delay would mean we would limit our ability to serve current and future members for an additional two years.

Why was the topic of membership dues not brought up at the NCS in 2023? Why now?

GSUSA have undertaken significant research and prioritization to develop our Movement strategy since we last came together in 2023 at the 56th National Council Session in Florida. With input from council leaders and delegates, and with this road map, we can chart our way forward. A membership dues increase is part of the investment in our Girl Scouts that can get us to the future we know is possible.

Who makes up the National Council?

The National Council is composed of delegates elected by chartered Girl Scout councils, delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas, members of the National Board of Directors, members of the National Board Development Committee, past presidents of GSUSA, and other persons as may be elected by the National Council.