

Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland
Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 376
March 7, 2012

It has been said that women's status in society is a direct measure of that society's success. But it goes deeper than that and starts with girls. The statistics we read about girls today have a predicting effect on all of our futures. A girl who doesn't believe she has what it takes to be a leader isn't likely to run for mayor one day. A girl who is laughed at by peers for being outspoken in the classroom isn't dreaming of sitting at the head of the table, running a board meeting. A girl who hides her abilities in science and math won't find the cure to illnesses that affect us all. Girl Scouts is a big part of the solution to these challenges, but during our 100th Anniversary year, our ability to continue serving today's girls and tomorrow's leaders is in jeopardy.

The three Girl Scout councils in Kansas (Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland, Girl Scouts of NE Kansas & NW Missouri and Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland) serve more than 30,000 Kansas girls and 10,000 adult volunteers. Our ability to serve as the premier leadership organization for girls - offering leadership experiences to **girls from all walks of life, regardless of ability to pay**, depends on our efforts to raise money from a variety of sources. Reductions in individual, corporate and United Way contributions have already forced us to close offices, camps and cancel programs. If sales tax exemptions are removed, girls would have even fewer opportunities.

For the sake of today's girls and tomorrow's leaders, we ask you to **oppose Senate Bill 376**, and allow us to maintain our current sales tax exemption. Girl Scout Cookie sales account for nearly sixty percent of our annual revenue, and the passing of the proposed bill would cause a negative economic impact on products sales alone of more than \$500,000 to the Girl Scouts organization in Kansas. Our current sales tax exemption is crucial to the viability of our organization.

This deep of a cut would potentially affect vital services such as outreach (serving girls in underrepresented or underprivileged areas), financial aid, volunteer training and Girl Scout properties. These areas are considered at risk because they are primarily "output"

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and not “input,” meaning we receive little if any income to offset expenses.

Some have suggested that we simply raise the price of a box of cookies to offset the sales-tax expense, but national statistics indicate that Girl Scout councils who have recently raised prices have experienced as much as a 20 percent drop in sales—meaning it is not a feasible option to pass the sales tax expense on to the consumer.

A decrease in sales would directly impact those we are serving. Girls use the funds from Cookie Sales to pay their own way through Girl Scouting. They purchase their own uniforms and earned awards, as well as supplies for their troop meetings and local community service projects.

Your opposition to Senate Bill 376 will help ensure that Girl Scouting in Kansas can continue to thrive by providing quality programs, leadership opportunities and outdoor educational experiences to girls from all walks of life. We ask you to consider the valuable services we provide (some of which federal and state services can no longer provide) when making decisions about non-profit sales tax exemptions.

Take these two scenarios as an example of the impact Girl Scouts has on our communities.

Olathe (from the Kansas City Star): *By the time Laurie Gilson was 3, she could hold up three fingers and recite “The Law.”*

I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and do, and to respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Lots of multisyllabic words for someone so young. But that’s the kind of thing that’s bound to happen when you’re a fourth-generation Girl Scout, says 12-year-old Laurie, a seventh grader at Indian Trail in Olathe. Laurie’s mom, Susie Gilson, is her troop leader. Her grandmother, Susan Kimbrough, led her mom. And Kimbrough’s mom led her.

As you can see, Girl Scouts' 100 year history is powerful, literally building generation after generation of leaders.

"I have the power and ability to do great things," Laurie says. (And yes, that's her talking, not reading from "The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting.")

Please consider future generations of Girl Scouts when making your decision to pass SB 376 (and cut Girl Scout funding) or oppose SB 376 and ensure that Laurie's daughters and granddaughters will have the same opportunities she did.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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