

**Constitutional Amendment on Membership Dues and
Procedure for Communication on Dues Actions by the National Board
Proposals 2 and 3 FAQs
Updated as of 8/24/2020**

***NOTE: These FAQs have been reorganized to group related questions
that have come up during the webinars.***

Below are some FAQs on Proposals 2 and 3. These will be updated on an ongoing basis as questions come in from the Delegate Website and the Delegate Education Webinars. We continue to review all questions that have come in and these will be updated accordingly.

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Basic Background

1. [What do these proposals do?](#)

These proposals expressly affirm that both the National Board and the National Council can set dues and require the National Board to engage in communication and input-gathering from both councils and delegates prior to making any dues changes. They also require the National Board to report out on the impact of any dues changes.

2. [Why are these proposals important?](#)

These proposals facilitate an approach to dues setting that increases council and delegate input and engagement, allows for flexibility and innovation, and ensures continued communication and transparency for National Board dues decisions.

Both the National Board and the National Council have been acting on dues over the last decade. This has allowed innovation and responsiveness to councils and members. For example, in 2014 the National Council amended the Constitution to allow for membership dues categories other than annual and lifetime memberships. Then, in 2017 the National Board approved a \$35 17-month extended year membership for new girl members to help recruitment over the summer, based on discussions the Movement has had over the years about an extended year membership. In 2018, the National Board expanded the extended-year membership to new adults after further council input. In April 2019, the National Board implemented a one-month discount promotion for lifetime membership for long-term volunteers and Girl Scout staff at the recommendation of a cross-Movement group looking at lifetime membership. The National Board also raised dues by \$3 in 2014 and \$10 in 2018 to fund more girl, council and volunteer programs and services (More history on dues setting is in the [Workbook](#); see also #34 below).

Some have disagreed and debated the National Board's actions (including a litigation in Alaska). Proposal 2 adds additional specific language stating that both the National Council and the National Board set dues, to resolve disagreements about who can set dues and avoid future disputes or litigations.

Most importantly, this language is coupled with a new Constitutional requirement for input and communication with councils and delegates, to make sure that the National Board hears from all stakeholders in making dues decisions. The proposals ensure informed decision making by the National Board, with communication and input from those affected by the change. The proposals put into the Constitution an assurance that the National Board will engage in an input gathering process with councils and delegates before making any changes. The proposals also increase transparency by requiring the National Board to report out afterward on any decisions and the impact of the change.

We encourage all delegates to watch the recorded presentations on [Proposal 2](#) and [Proposal 3](#) available on the Delegate Website for more info and background on why the NCS Advisory Group, Dues Subgroup, and National Board believe in the importance of these proposals.

3. [How were these proposals co-created?](#)

In anticipation of the upcoming National Council Session, the National Board asked the NCS Advisory Team to provide recommendations on potential dues proposals given an increased interest in and dialogue about dues in the Movement. The NCS Advisory Team created a Dues Subgroup to gather input on dues setting and provide recommendations to the NCS Advisory Team and the National Board. The group included Movement volunteers and council leadership from small, medium, and large councils.

In November 2019, during a Girl Scout council leadership conference, the Dues Subgroup facilitated several discussion sessions and invited council board chairs and CEOs to discuss their views, concerns, and ideas for how membership dues setting should work. The conference was attended by CEOs and board chairs from across the Movement, with 203 Board Chairs and CEOs (representing 104 Girl Scout councils) along with 17 National Board and National Board Development Committee members.

In those discussions, board flexibility, collaboration with delegates and councils prior to decisions, and transparency and accountability on effective use of dues rose to the top as the most important dues setting considerations. Council leaders expressed that the National Board should have the flexibility and responsibility to oversee matters like dues in their role as stewards elected by the delegates to oversee Movement affairs. In addition, council leaders stated that communication and transparency about dues decisions, input gathering from affected stakeholders, and reporting out on why decisions were taken and the impact of any changes, were also very important.

The Dues Subgroup and the NCS Advisory Team considered this feedback, consulted with additional councils and some delegates, and recommended these proposals based on careful consideration of the input gathered, how dues setting has worked over the years, the needs of the Girl Scout organization as a whole, and how delegates, councils and GSUSA could all work together for the good of the Movement.

The [Workbook](#) has more detail on this process, which led to these proposals.

4. [What would these proposals change?](#)

These proposals would add specific language to the Constitution that both the National Board and National Council act on dues. The National Board currently acts on dues, as does the National Council, but there has been increased dialogue recently on whether this should be the case (including a lawsuit in Alaska). The specific language would affirm the delegates' agreement that our current practice, with both the National Board and the National Council having authority to take action on dues, is the best way for our Movement to work. It would also formalize and institute a communication and input gathering process by putting a requirement in the Constitution that the board engage in input gathering and communication with both councils and delegates on dues, and establish procedures for that input gathering and communication.

If Proposal 2 passes, it means that the National Council through its democratic process is stating how our Movement takes action on dues. If Proposal 2 does not pass, there could be continued disruption to the Movement from disagreements over dues setting. The National Board would also not be constitutionally required to get input from councils and delegates before acting on dues. See question #22 below for additional information about what happens if Proposal 2 does not pass.

How it Works if Either the National Board or the National Council Sets Dues

5. **How does it work if both the National Council and the National Board can set dues? If the National Board can set dues, does that negate the ability of the National Council to set dues? (And vice versa?)**

No, each could act on dues. The National Council could consider and act on dues proposals at National Council Sessions. The National Board could consider and act on dues proposals in between National Council Sessions. This is how things currently operate. For example, at the 2017 National Council Session, the National Council considered a proposal and set the price for lifetime membership. There is also a dues proposal on the agenda for NCS 2020 for the National Council to consider: a [discounted lifetime membership for volunteers](#). And between the 2017 and 2020 National Council Sessions the National Board voted to create a \$35 extended year membership for new girls and new adults and a lifetime membership promotion for volunteers.

These proposals will keep that process but ensure that delegate and council voice is heard before the National Board takes actions. In the future, for example, at a National Council Session, delegates might express interest in establishing a family discount for membership dues. Between National Council Sessions the National Board could form a task group to explore, seek input from councils and delegates on proposed changes, and take action to implement.

6. **Why is it important for the National Board to be able to act in between National Council sessions?**

The flexibility for the board to act in between National Council sessions allows the board to respond to changing circumstances, steward the finances and other affairs of the organization, innovate with new programs and initiatives, and also be responsive to concerns and needs. This is similar to how local council boards act on financial matters of the council (such as council service fees, cookie box pricing, or other council local program fees). For example, extended year membership – which is a discount for new members who sign up for two years in a row – came about because the National Board was able to act in between National Council Sessions to approve and roll out this program, after a task force with council representation studied membership options and provided input that this would be a desirable program to help recruitment and retention.

Democratic Process and Disagreeing with the Decisions of the Board

7. **What if delegates don't like or disagree with a proposed change by the National Board?**

The National Board will be getting input from across the Movement before making dues changes and balancing many different voices and input as national stewards of the organization. The input gathering process will enable the National Board to make informed decisions, taking the input gathered into account. If ultimately delegates do not like the actions of the National Board, they can bring their own proposal at the next National Council Session to change the actions of the National Board. Delegates also have the power to elect members of the National Board and National Board Development Committee.

8. **Can the National Council undo a change in dues enacted by the National Board between National Council Sessions at the next National Council Session?**

Yes, the National Council can always bring its own proposals on dues at the next National Council Session. See question #7 above.

Input Gathering and Communication Process

9. **How will input be gathered prior to a dues increase? What will the process be?**

Input could be obtained in a variety of ways, such as:

- delegate surveys
- the delegate website
- working groups or task forces with council representatives (this is what resulted in the extended-year membership program, which is a discount for new members)
- discussions during Board Chair/CEO or other Movement conferences
- Q&A sessions

The process would vary depending on the circumstances. No one size fits all, which is why every specific detail is not included in the proposals. For example, the input gathering and report out process would be different depending on whether the change was a short lifetime membership promotion (as was done in April 2019) or an annual membership dues change.

GSUSA and councils would be able to work through different input and communication gathering methods and adapt to ensure the most meaningful and effective process. However, two-way communication will always be part of the procedures, as required by the Constitution in Proposal 2.

10. **What kind of reporting out will be done?**

Reports on impact could also vary, based on the type of change and types of communication methods available. For example, the report outs could include results and analyses of membership pilots, descriptions of use of funds, changes to financial trajectories or membership figures and trends. Report outs could also include a summary of input received from councils and delegates and how that input influenced the ultimate decisions and actions. Information could be communicated in a variety of ways based on what is found to be the most useful and effective, such as Delegate Website updates, emails, newsletters, stewardship reports, or webinars.

11. **Why don't these proposals include a specific time frame for the input gathering process?**

No time frame is specified because different time frames may be appropriate depending on the circumstances, the type of change, and how much effect it would have. The procedures should be flexible to allow for different circumstances. For example, when the National Board added adults to the extended year discounted membership that already existed for girls, it was able to announce that change in just one month since the change had minimal impact on councils (and the fast implementation was also at the request of councils). For dues increases, the National Board understands the importance, whenever possible, of providing a long lead time for input-gathering and planning for increases, aligned with the timeline for councils' spring renewals and other membership recruiting activities.

12. Would data collected by the National Board be shared and open to comment before the National Board takes action?

Yes, through these proposals the National Board is making a commitment to transparent and open communication and providing the rationale for any dues action. See #9 for how the National Board could gather input from councils and delegates.

13. How many councils and national delegates will be contacted prior to any membership dues change? Will this be transparent to the rest of the national delegates and the membership at large?

The input and communication process will vary depending on the change. No one size fits all, which is why every specific detail is not included in the proposals. For example, the input gathering and report out process would be different depending on whether the change was a short lifetime membership promotion (as was done in April 2019) or an annual membership dues change.

Council leadership would likely be consulted in routine leadership meetings which happen throughout the triennium. National delegates would likely be consulted via the delegate website through comment-gathering or surveys. National delegates will need to remain engaged throughout their three-year delegate term to fully participate in providing input, including discussing with membership in their communities. See #9 and #10 above for more on the input and reporting process, which talks about the variety of ways that this two-way communication could occur.

14. How will input from local councils be diverse from a socioeconomic perspective?

Girl Scouts is a large Movement and each council is diverse. The National Board is committed to broad-based input gathering from delegates and councils through these proposals. Councils as well as delegates, in representing girls and families in their communities, will need to participate in providing input to bring these perspectives to the table when considering dues changes. The proposals enable input from both councils and delegates, and delegates can and should help ensure the gathering of data from members in their council is broad-based and inclusive of members from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

15. If the National Board is seeking input from different councils and delegates in different communities, what will stop arguments between different groups? Every area will have a different opinion on what's appropriate. How will that be evened out?

More voices are always helpful to provide different perspectives. The National Board is elected to steward the Movement as a whole and will balance all input for the good of the organization.

We are a large, democratic organization and councils, delegates, and the National Board may not always agree with each other and amongst themselves, just as Girl Scout volunteers do not always agree on local council matters. These proposals bring a commitment to a transparent process with communication and dialogue so that all parties who have points of data to bring to the table can do so.

How the Board will Take Input Into Account

16. How do we know that the National Board will actually seek input before making changes?

Proposal 2 makes input gathering and communication prior to any change a Constitutional requirement. The Constitution is GSUSA's most important governing document (aside from its Congressional charter) and can only be changed by a 2/3 vote of the National Council. The National Board, through these proposals, is committing to input and communication with councils and delegates about dues changes by putting this promise of communication in the Constitution. Proposal 3 then gives more specifics about the communication and input gathering process.

Even before this NCS and consideration of this proposal, GSUSA has been working to increase delegate engagement – creating a robust and extensive delegate education process for NCS 2020, hiring a delegate engagement lead, populating the delegate website with significant information throughout the triennium, holding webinars specifically for delegates, and more. These proposals continue that move toward increased communication and input gathering throughout the triennium.

17. The proposals just say the board will seek input, not that the input will actually be taken into account. How do we know that the National Board will actually take the input into consideration?

The National Board will share reasons for proposed changes, gather information and listen to input, considering it along with economic projections, investments needed to serve additional girls and develop programming, potential for growth to the Movement by offering different membership categories, promotions and amounts, and more. Council boards and the National Board operate in a similar manner when considering financial decisions: as elected representatives, both council boards and the National Board consider input and then make decisions balancing all input and information. This is the deliberative process of a board: a board is elected to consider input and then exercise judgement and make decisions about what is in the best interest of the Movement. To help those decisions by the National Board, these proposals require that two-way communication will always be part of the procedures, as required by the Constitution in Proposal 3. See Question #9 for more on how the input process might work, and #15 for how the National Board balances input.

Relationship of Proposals 2, 3 and 4; How Voting for One Affects the Others

18. Why are there two proposals, one amending the Constitution and one amending the Blue Book with new procedures? Why is input and communication mentioned in both places?

Proposal 2 amends the Constitution to (i) expressly state that both the National Board and the National Council set dues and (ii) require the National Board to implement procedures for input and communication with councils and delegates before any dues changes. Proposal 3 then establishes those procedures. The Constitutional amendment contains general governing principles, and the procedures implement those principles in more detail. The details could be expanded on over time but under the Constitution will always require communication and input gathering from councils and delegates.

19. Can all three dues proposals be approved or are they mutually exclusive?

Yes, all three can be approved. [Proposal 2](#) adds specific language to the Constitution affirming that both the National Council and National Board can act on dues and requires input and communication with both councils and delegates before the board can act. [Proposal 3](#) establishes procedures for that input and communication with councils and delegates. [Proposal 4](#) imposes a limit on the amount the board could raise dues without having to come back to the National Council for approval.

20. If Proposal 2 passes, would Proposal 4 still be considered?

Yes. Proposal 2 adds specific language to the Constitution affirming that both the National Council and National Board act on dues and requires input and communication with both councils and delegates before the board can act. Proposal 4 imposes an outer limit on the amount the board could raise dues in any one triennium without having to come back to the National Council to seek approval. See #19 above.

21. If Proposal 2 does not pass, would Proposals 3 and 4 still be considered? If Proposals 2 and 3 do not pass, would Proposal 4 still be considered?

Yes. Proposal 2 adds express language around dues setting and puts a requirement in the Constitution that the National Board must engage in input gathering and communication with councils and delegates prior to any dues changes. Proposal 3 creates those procedures for input gathering and communication, and reporting out on results. If Proposal 2 did not pass, the National Board could still act under the general constitutional language and Proposal 3 would create procedures for it. If Proposals 2 and 3 did not pass, the National Board could still act under the general language of the Constitution but without any required procedures for input and communication, and Proposal 4 would put an outer limit on the amount on the amount the National Board could raise dues in a triennium.

22. If Proposal 2 does not pass, who can act on dues?

If Proposal 2 does not pass, both the National Council and the National Board may still act on dues just as they have been doing for over a decade. However, the National Board would not be constitutionally required to get input from councils and delegates before doing so. In addition, there could be continued disruption to the Movement because of disagreements over dues setting.

The National Board has authority under other general constitutional provisions to set dues, even without this amendment, and has been acting on dues since 2008 (see the [Workbook](#) for additional dues history). Proposal 2 adds additional specific language stating that both the National Council and the National Board can set dues, because some have disagreed and debated the National Board's actions (including a litigation in Alaska). The National Board, along with the NCS Advisory Group and Dues Subgroup, feel that for the good of the Movement and to eliminate further questions on this topic, it is important to add specific language to resolve disagreements about who can set dues and avoid future disputes or litigations. Importantly, the new language also adds a new Constitutional requirement for input and communication with councils and delegates, to make sure that the National Board hears from all stakeholders in making dues decisions.

23. What if Proposal 2 is amended to provide that only the National Council sets dues, and this amendment passes?

This would mean that the National Board can no longer set membership dues. The National Board would not be in a position to monitor and respond quickly to changing economic conditions and feedback in the same way local council boards are able to. The National Board could not approve any further lifetime membership promotions, new alternative flexible membership categories like family membership, or make any dues changes between sessions of the National Council, regardless of the amounts. Currently, our National Council Session only meets every three years and would consider dues proposals at that time. It is possible to convene the National Council more frequently through calling in-person special sessions, but the increased, unbudgeted cost and operational implications for councils and GSUSA are difficult to forecast.

24. If Proposal 2 is amended so that only the National Council has authority to set dues, and the proposal as so amended passes, would Proposals 3 and 4 be null and void?

Yes, if Proposal 2 is amended to state that only the National Council has dues authority, and that proposal as so amended passes, it would not make sense to create procedures for input gathering and reporting by the board on dues setting or to put an outer limit on board dues increases, because the board would no longer be setting dues.

25. What happens if Proposal 4 passes but Proposal 2 does not?

If Proposal 2 does not pass but Proposal 4 does, the National Board (as well as the National Council) could still act on dues under the general language of the Constitution but without any required procedures for input and communication, and Proposal 4 would put an outer limit on the amount on the amount the National Board could raise dues in a triennium without seeking National Council approval.

Without the specific language added by Proposal 2, there could also be continued questions and disagreement over Constitutional language on who sets dues, which could lead to future disputes or litigations.

Reordering the Proposals

26. What if I want to vote on Proposal 4 (with the 25% restriction on increases on dues) before I consider the other membership dues proposals? Can the order of the Proposals be changed?

Delegates can make a motion to change the order of the program. It requires a majority vote to pass. If a delegate intends to make this motion, we would recommend submitting the potential motion to gsdelegates@girlscouts.org. Then, if the delegate has the opportunity to make this motion, we would be able to facilitate this more efficiently during the National Council Session.

Amendments Regarding Only the National Council Setting Dues

27. What if I want only the National Council to set dues? How could I amend these proposals?

Those who disagree with the approach set forth in these proposals and want only the National Council to set dues could move to amend Proposal 2 to strike the words “the National Board,” and insert “only,” and strike the entire second sentence, so that instead Proposal 2 would read: “Dues are set only by the National Council.”

28. What if I proposed an amendment to say dues are set by the National Council “and” the National Board (rather than dues are set by the National Council “or” the National Board)?

This amendment would not lead to clarity in our governing documents. Saying the National Council “and” the National Board set dues could be interpreted in a variety of ways, including that each body sets dues at their own meetings. If a delegate disagrees that the National Board should set dues, the delegate could consider proposing an amendment along the lines set forth in #27 above. Moreover, the parliamentarian advises that it would likely be ruled out of order “because the National Board members are part of the National Council and therefore to mandate that the two groups both act on the same proposal makes no sense.”

Affordability of Dues

29. Please tell us more about the criteria used to consider a dues increase.

National membership dues increases are carefully considered, in the same way councils carefully consider setting or increasing a Council Service Fee, cookie box prices, or local council fees for council programming. The National Board recognizes that dues increases can be a hardship and can affect different communities and families from varied socioeconomic backgrounds more severely, and is committed through these proposals to an input and communication gathering process, as well as working with councils to find additional ways to support all girls who want to be part of Girl Scouting. Increases are not on an automatic timetable. Any dues increases would be based on careful consideration of a variety of factors, including projected costs to serve girls with quality programming and develop volunteer resources and training, Movement-wide financial stability, other youth organizations’ dues, and importantly, what is appropriate and affordable for girls, families and volunteers. These proposals are intended to show the National Board’s commitment to input gathering from both delegates and councils when considering dues increases and other dues changes.

30. Dues increases may hit low-income families more adversely. Will there be financial assistance if there is a dues increase?

The National Board is committed to making sure that Girl Scouts is available and accessible to all who want to participate, to partnering with councils on solutions to make Girl Scouts affordable and to continuing to diversify revenue streams. Any consideration of a dues increase would take this into account. For example, when dues were increased in 2016, the National Board granted \$4.9 million back to councils to assist with membership efforts for girls from underserved and underrepresented communities.

31. Will the amount of dues change based on regional cost of living differences or will there be one overall amount?

Currently there is only a single dues structure – all members pay the same amount of dues. These proposals do not change that. Whether the National Council or the National Board sets dues, all members currently pay the same amount. The purpose of this proposal is to increase input and collaboration prior to any dues actions, recognizing and reinforcing the need to hear from many stakeholders as each council serves diverse communities across the Movement.

32. How will these proposals affect girls who want to be involved in Girl Scouts but can't afford it?

These proposals will enable additional input from councils and delegates prior to any change which will offer the opportunity to provide additional information to the board about how proposed changes may affect girls of different income levels. Acting in between National Council Sessions also enables the National Board to explore with councils and delegates to potentially create promotions, discounts and new membership categories in between National Council Sessions and not wait every three years.

33. Is a dues increase being considered in the next triennium?

No dues increase is currently being contemplated for the next triennium, although future changes in financial circumstances or forecasting could require a re-evaluation. However, any increase would be subject to the full input and communication process detailed in these proposals. See FAQ #29 for the factors that would go into a future increase. These proposals are about making the process for future dues increases, or any other dues changes, a robust and transparent one, where the board hears input from councils and delegates that can help inform its decision making.

Use of Dues

34. What was the intent of the \$10 dues increase in 2017? Did it pay for what was intended?

The \$10 increase that took effect on October 1, 2017 (for the 2018 membership year), like the increase that took effect on October 1, 2013 (for the 2014 membership year), was intended to sustain and improve girl leadership programs, implement digital innovations and technology to enhance the girl and volunteer experience nationwide, maintain services for members and continue to engage alum around the world. To date, the dues increases have funded critical investments in programming, brand and technology, including 129 new badges and 30 new Journeys (including 24 badges released in 2020), technology advancements including Digital Cookie, CEI, and the Volunteer Toolkit, and Movement-wide brand campaigns. As with other organizations, building technology solutions requires a large investment up front; these digital and technology tools are used by girls, volunteers and councils across the country to make Girl Scouting easier and more effective. In 2018 GSUSA also granted \$4.9 million back to councils to support membership efforts for girls from underserved and underrepresented communities.

Additional information will be available in the upcoming Stewardship Report which is scheduled to be released the first week of September. We encourage all delegates to attend the live Stewardship Report webinar on September 9, 2020.

Special Sessions

35. If there is concern about waiting every three years for the National Council to set dues, can't a special session just be electronically held to consider a dues proposal between regular NCS sessions?

No. Absent an emergency, like the COVID pandemic, special sessions must be held in person. Because of the national emergency and global pandemic that made it impossible for the National Council to be held in person, the Board authorized the 2020 NCS to be held virtually. The Constitution does not otherwise provide for virtual special or regular sessions of the National Council.

36. Would Proposals 2 and 3 cover dues decreases as well as increases?

Yes, these proposals cover all types of dues changes, so it would include dues decreases as well as increases, and all other types of changes related to dues, including dues for extended year membership, lifetime member discounts, and future possibilities such as family memberships.

37. What is a council service fee? How do these proposals affect the council service fee?

In 2011, delegates at the National Council Session approved an annual council service fee option. This action gave councils the option to assess a fee to help cover costs related to administration of the Girl Scout program for girls. The fee is determined by the individual council and cannot exceed the cost of the full-year annual membership dues set by GSUSA. Less than half of councils (39) currently have a council service fee. Of these, the majority charge a service fee less than the amount of GSUSA annual dues. For example, many charge a service fee of \$10; some charge a service fee of \$5. Only two councils currently charge a service fee equal to the current annual membership dues. These proposals address how national membership dues can be changed and the process for it. They do not change the council service fee.