

ASSOCIATION 10: SOUTHERN MARYLAND
CHAIR: J. LYNN WEINBERGER

We the members of Association 10 respond with the following response:

An overall “yes” was heard from the majority of our members, including teen Girl Scouts. We are hoping for a clearer definition of what an “association” is to do, along with a formal training session (incorporated into current classes) to help all volunteers understand the benefits and challenges of an Association.

- Continue to increase the Girl involvement at the association and council level, possibly add a requirement to have a girl serve as a Delegate for her association.
- Delegate elections at the Service Unit level would be a wonderful opportunity for members, which are more familiar with their Service Unit membership. They will have a better ability to promote the delegate opportunity, and represent the opinions/needs of their Service Unit. Re-design the current delegate training to include more of what a delegate actually needs to do at the Association and Service Unit levels.
- Incorporate a Senior / Junior ranking system into the delegate role. This will help with responsibility and training at the Association.
- Each Service Unit should have a certain number of delegates, dependant upon size. Continue with the election process, only at the Service Unit level.
- Forums would be a great idea, as long as council staff members don't mind going out into the “trenches.” Many of our volunteers have no idea what or who council is beyond the field staff that attends Service Unit Manager Meetings on a monthly basis (and most of them don't talk at these meetings). This will allow all of us a better understanding of our Girl Scout sisters.
- Having council forums will bring our Girl Scout Government closer to the membership, and it will allow Board Members to be more attainable, however we are concerned about whether this change would cause too much of a burden on those who are elected at the Service Unit, Associations, and Council. Most of us hear, “It seems there are already so many meetings to attend.”

Suggestions for changes to the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital Annual Meeting:

- Divide the 2-minute Association presentations. At the beginning of the meeting, half of the Associations state their response. Towards the end of the meeting, the remaining Associations state their response.
- Forum outcomes, and program highlights need to be included in the Annual meeting. Especially when future plans are in the planning stages.

Association 10 volunteers see that there are a lot of unanswered questions that need to be answered, mapping out of each entities responsibilities (Association Chair/Assistant Chair, Delegate, Service Unit Manager, Field Staff) and training of the membership. During the past few years, changes have been made at the council level, and then passed to the volunteers. Service Units have been left struggling to answer questions, when there has been no clear understanding at any of the volunteer positions (and sometime paid positions). Please ensure that you make every effort to make this a knowledgeable transition for all volunteers.

**ASSOCIATION 21: SOUTHERN PRINCE GEORGE'S
CHAIR: SANDRA EDMONDS**

In Association 21, we believe that the proposed changes to the structure of Associations would better define the roles of the Association, Service Unit, and Delegate. Currently, the Association is like the middle person between the Service Units and Council. The role of the association appears repetitious in that they offer activities, events, programs, and community service projects that are similar to what the Service Unit and Council offers or promote to troops. It is important that responsibilities are not duplicated once this transition is made.

The role of the delegate will then become a vital part of the organization. Delegates, especially teen delegates, will find out exactly how strong their voices are when it comes to helping the Board set direction for the council. The regional forums will become an important tool in sharing opinions and ideas. Having attended one of the recent forums, I know that quite a few new delegates were receptive to the idea of having a place to discuss Girl Scout business with other delegates.

On the other hand, many of our members feel that though council asks for our input, they rarely make any identifiable changes because of it. Our Service Unit Managers have responded that the Virginia location of the Service Unit Manager Kick-Off is a problem for us, yet it hasn't been changed. Why respond to requests for our input or action if there is no change? Service Units are often unresponsive to our association requests for candidates and feedback due to their inability to find adequate volunteers on the Service Unit level. Placing additional responsibilities on the Service Units as a result of this change may not have the desired results.

Some believe that the proposed organizational changes would simplify and provide clarity to the way we do business. Others don't know how the association works, so providing any response to proposed changes doesn't really make sense. Are we ready for a change to our Association? Yes, we are. Positive changes will benefit everyone.

ASSOCIATION 22: CENTRAL PRINCE GEORGE'S
CHAIR: KAY SLONAKER

Our response to change in the Association structure is mixed. We would like to see a more effective and efficient dialogue between our membership and the Board. We agree that a Service Unit based delegate system could potentially provide a greater amount of accountability for both the Nominating and Referral Committee and the elected Delegates. We hope it would mean that Delegates would be more connected to the people they represent. We are not convinced that it will correct the participation issues. We are concerned that this fragments the election process even further and wonder if it will solve the problems of the election process or magnify them. We are concerned that smaller Service Units might struggle with the responsibility and that any system that is adopted would safeguard a fair and equitable representation of all our constituencies. But we are ready to try a new election process.

We welcome the increased dialogue that forums would provide, but we are concerned that they be held in a manner that promotes full participation. More meetings could potentially reduce our ability to find willing delegates and convenient time and place for these is important.

We are most concerned about the role that Associations are to have in this new structure. The responsibility of the Associations as defined in our current bylaws is that of policy influencing. If this function is to be carried out at a Service Unit level, then what reason will there be to have Associations? We are concerned that the ability of some Associations to go far beyond their defined role and operate as a program providing unit, has led to the expectation that program will be developed and provided in this way rather than through the program department. There is currently a marked inequity in the geographic distribution of program opportunities. We are concerned that increasing the role of Associations in providing program would increase this even more. Areas with smaller volunteer pools are already struggling to carry out their required operations. We are concerned that program opportunities be available to Girl Scouts in all our Associations.

Under our current structure Associations are not program units. Service units provide many activities, each with their own calendar and we are not structured for coordinating these to accommodate Association events. If the role of Associations is to be redefined, we want assurance that Associations that are not functioning now in program development and delivery or leadership cultivation will be given adequate support from council to restructure and to grow into these new areas. We do not want to see our volunteer base further taxed by the changes we make. We want to see changes that make our volunteers at all levels feel more empowered, more supported and more effective.

ASSOCIATION 23: NORTHERN PRINCE GEORGE'S
CHAIR: TERRI WALLACE

Are we ready for change in our local Association structure? Association 23 says “Yes, we are ready.” In fact, there were so many great avenues for change presented at last year’s Annual Meeting that we were surprised to be asked this question at all.

The Association plays a key role in many supporting functions: recognitions, product sales, Nominating and Referral Committee, delegates, area-wide programs, and community visibility to name a few. Some of these functions could be moved to either Service Unit or council level, but others will be of the most benefit if they remain at this level.

We strongly feel that organizational issues should be addressed at the Service Unit level where more girls will have their voices heard. For this reason, we would like the bylaws to be amended to have one delegate and one alternate be elected at the Service Unit level and at-large delegates to be elected at the Association level. The forums held over the past few months were a refreshing change from the delegate meetings held in the past. They allowed us to talk directly to members of the Board. All the delegates, both girls and adults, felt that our voices were indeed being heard. We would like the bylaws amended to mandate these forums so that the Board directly hears the organizational concerns that the membership has.

The Association holds key roles within Girl Scouting. One of these roles is in recognitions where the Association helps to insure that volunteers are recognized for the varied positions that they hold.

Another key role for the association is community visibility. Businesses and organizations along with non-troop affiliated adults can be involved through association meets, retreats, and other activities. Teens have an opportunity for a wider range of experience through association events. When younger girls attend an Association event, they learn that Girl Scouts come from all backgrounds and all communities.

We realize that change comes hard. We are facing numerous changes to our program and level structure, our branding, and our uniforms (to name a few). We must not hurry this change along or force it down our members’ throats. We must communicate to all of our members -- experienced and new, girls and adults -- why we are changing and what our goals are.

As a council that has been regarded as the ‘council to watch’, we must be careful that any changes we make are done carefully -- with training at the Service Unit and Delegates level on the new responsibilities, with the number of delegates per Service Unit determined by headcount, with bylaw changes to insure that any changes increase girl involvement -- are done correctly, and are well-funded so that our council remains at the forefront of Girl Scouting in America.

ASSOCIATION 31: GEORGIA CROSSING
CHAIR: JANICE STRACHAN

Association 31 is **not** ready for a change in the association structure.

Delegates who attended the “forum” in January felt that this is a “done deal” – that you have already decided to change.

We heard that some associations are not functioning well. If there are a lot, then we can understand why you want to change. If there are only a few, then focus on fixing those few. Don’t force everyone to change just because some have trouble functioning within the current structure.

Associations have had success making changes at the council level. For example, council pays our parking when we visit the council office and we have two Teen members on the Board.

Council’s Training Department needs to provide more education about associations so we can participate more fully. Stress the council structure in all courses. Develop Short and Snappy training.

There is a feeling that volunteers are dictated to by staff rather than supported by staff.

We need the Board and council to respond quickly, as if they heard and understood us. We do not want an adversarial relationship.

If the Board decides what topics are discussed at forums (as they do with the two-minute question), then we are not confident about the value of forums. We want time to discuss hot topics.

What is the role of teen delegates? Where is their voice in this? Girls feel that we have lost our connection to Girl Scouting as a bigger organization.

What is proposed is a radical change that has not been adequately explained. It will require much more education to understand and do. Until we get more education, we do not believe it is time to change.

ASSOCIATION 32: NORTHERN MONTGOMERY
ACTING CHAIR: WANDA HOY

Yes, Association 32 is ready for change. Association 32 supports the change in the selection process of the delegates to be done on the service unit level and have provided some recommendations for implementation. We further recommend a change in the bylaws concerning the dismissal of a delegate as a result of an inability to attend the annual meeting. We also recognize the need for changes in the procedures for the recognition process and encourage change in the communication process.

The majority of our service units support the selection of delegates at the service unit level, as long as it remains proportional to the number of girls. We would like to add, however, that the girl delegate should have the flexibility of a one-year term. This will allow a greater number of girls to participate and as they leave for college and other endeavors, they will not be leaving this position vacant. Additionally, we recommend that adults can serve up to three two-year terms. After one year off, they may be nominated for up to another three two-year terms. We also disagree with the current policy to remove a delegate for missing an annual meeting for good cause. There are many circumstances where, a delegate should be allowed to continue his/her term, as long as proper advance notice was given for the absence. This bylaw definitely needs to be amended.

Another role of the association was to provide a forum for recognitions of multiple service units. While we support having recognitions done on an association level, we realize that there are operational concerns. One concern is that we will not be able to reach quorum. We have already found this to be a problem. We welcome input from other associations as to how they are handling this issue.

We are further concerned about communication with the Board and that the Board is accessible to the membership. Although we appreciate and welcome the Board's desire for more contact with our delegates, we are concerned about the expectation of the number of meetings and the distance the delegates must travel to delegate meetings. If delegates are expected to go to council, which was the closest location as of the last Local Governance Task Forum, this may eliminate interest of our adult leadership. The questions are: what will be the frequency of meetings with delegates? We agree that once a year is not enough. Where will the meetings be located? And would the Board solicit input from the delegates before selecting meetings times and locations? We agree that a change in the current association structure can bring a positive change. We embrace the idea of a reverse direction of voice from organization down to the membership, to an organization where the relevant concerns and issues are raised to the top of the organization from the membership. We hope that by moving delegates to the

service unit level, it will open the lines of communication from the membership to the council, thus providing a more accurate representation of its membership.

While answering this question, many other questions arose. One was, what are associations and what do they do? We discovered that associations need more visibility. Many leaders do not know what associations are and how they connect to the service unit. The other question that arose that was more pressing to the service units than the change is the associations were concerning the issue regarding the change in program levels from Daisy to Ambassador. All of our troop leaders, in our association are concerned with the proposed changes in program levels, books, and uniforms. We are frustrated that this has been implemented without discussion by the membership. The service units wanted to know how will the change in program levels affect our service units? And how will it effect training? As we see uniforms being discontinued, we see some preparations for the transition taking place. We are eager for answers to these questions. We have been told that this should take place in 2008, but we do need more information on how the transition will take place.

In conclusion, Association 32 supports the change in the association structure with the emphasis on improved communication from its membership to the council. We look forward to being an active participant in the decision making of the logistical implementation throughout the transition process.

ASSOCIATION 33: HEART OF MONTGOMERY
CHAIR: SHARON BANKS-TARR

The members of Association 33 understand that it is time to consider change in our local Association structure. The focal point of the change would be to strengthen the Service Unit/Troop, promote the communicator role of the Delegates, and ensure that as the council expands, the grassroots interaction is central to local governance. The addition of forums would then support the Annual Meeting using the two-minute question timeframe for feedback in regards to the questions, concerns and actions set in motion by interaction of Executive leadership with the membership. The following action items are the key steps as we consider change:

- Change the Association meetings to a Service Unit semi-annual Roundtable. This would serve as an idea exchange where members could interact and share what they are doing, what works, and what's on the horizon.
- Incorporate non-affiliated volunteers back into the Service Unit monthly meetings and semi-annual roundtables so that the members can benefit from their wealth of expertise.
- Invite the non-affiliated volunteers back into the Service Unit team to strengthen knowledge and mentoring base.
- Focus on a resource based mailing list that identifies the "gifts that affiliated and non-affiliated volunteers would offer to troops such as camping skills, leading troops or parent meetings and much more.
- Elect delegates from within the Service Unit to create a more direct relationship with troop leaders and the Board.
- Endorse voting members to vote by proxy, if they are unable to attend the Association/ Roundtable meetings.
- Increase the use of electronic information sharing of decision making materials, such as the election slate, operational concerns/suggestions that could be published to a central location to ensure its timely access.
- Host virtual Association/Roundtable meetings as an alternative way for volunteers to participate.
- Transfer the recognition function to the semi-Annual Roundtable meetings since the work of the committee resides within the Service Unit for nominees and supporting documentation.
- Consolidate the following leadership roles such as teen Scout group, cookies, SHARE, QSP, local press representation, training manager, community visibility, and cluster meetings to the Area level of leadership.

ASSOCIATION 34: MONTGOMERY CRESCENT
CHAIR: KAY BEHALL

Association 34 feels that any change to the current association structure should be to obtain greater participation, better communication and a meaningful and active role for the delegates.

Many Girl Scouts question ‘What is an Association.’ New leaders have no clue. Many do nothing beyond their own troop. Education from council is needed to clarify the role and functions the association plays in the council structure. With the suggested changes in the current Association and Service Unit functions, education will be vital so all Girl Scouts have the same information and the reasons they need to participate beyond the troop. Restructuring the association may streamline the functions, jobs and activities currently shared by the Association and Service Units.

Do not increase the work load of the Service Unit managers. The number of Service Unit meetings could be decreased and replaced with delegate meetings to update the Service Unit on Forum meetings and activities and to help plan Association/Area and/or Service Unit events.

The Service Unit could appoint delegates to maintain an adult/girl ratio. However, an election would put the names of delegates and alternate delegates before the Service Unit members while appointed delegates may appear to be in an unimportant position for the Service Unit. Election of delegates at the Service Unit level would make the delegate a more meaningful voice in the running of the council.

The questions remain that if delegates/alternates are elected, how will a quorum be defined at the Service Unit level, and what will be the mechanism to incorporate girls and non-troop affiliated adults into the delegate/alternate process?

The Delegate role should be more leadership oriented. Election at the Service Unit level would give more empowerment to the position and help leaders become more aware of what is going on at the council level. Change the term to a one- or two-year term with a defined role and meeting obligations. Meetings would need to be scheduled in advance so delegates and alternates could plan for and commit to attending the meetings.

Delegate meetings should be structured to receive and debate council positions and questions and Service Unit suggestions. Meetings should be focused on topics and not procedure. A positive flow of information should exist. Delegates should be expected to be active participants of their Service Unit. Council should have training for all delegates so it is consistent across the council.

We still see a need for a Chair and Co-chair/Assistant Chair, SHARE and Sales coordinators and Recognitions and Nomination/Referral committees. Plan to have an Association or Area event planner for area wide events. Often a Service Unit would like to have an event or activity but does not feel it has enough girls to make the event practical. The delegates or Service Unit representative could help plan events similar to the way the older girl/leader groups (such as MCOGL, TOGA, etc) function in several areas of the council.

Addressing governance issues, policy concerns and member input would have to shift to the proposed Forums with the delegate's role more critical.

Communications have to be increased with faster turn-around on questions from the members and information given a wider distribution. The Forum agenda should give faster turn-around of discussions and questions.

Area Forums will help reduce the commute times to council meetings. Consider virtual meetings or conference calls. As our boundaries enlarge and our numbers increase, face to face meetings will become more difficult. Virtual meetings could get more people tied into a meeting. These would save time for those with long transportation commutes. Face to face meetings are still important as they give people a chance to interact and share thoughts easier than on a conference call and should be maintained for the majority of meetings.

Other thoughts or questions from the Association included: Ask the girl members of the Board of Directors what would be meaningful at Forum meetings for other girl delegates. What would happen to the money that currently goes to the Association? Would it be retained for Association recognition and area activities or would part of it go to the Service Unit for these activities? Could girls work as a team (adult/girl or girl/girl team) for 2 years where, between them, they jointly or singularly attend all meetings?

ASSOCIATION 37: FREDERICK COUNTY
CHAIR: JEAN TURNER

We, Association 37 Frederick County, would like to thank you, Girl Scout Council of Nations Capital, for so graciously welcoming all of us into your council.

Now in reference to the question, “**Are We Ready for Change in the Local Association Structure?**” we would like to say, Yes we are ready for a change for a number of reasons.

First, it would be more beneficial to streamline the communication between the Associations and/or Service Units and Council. The process of identifying the 2-minute question during the Annual Meeting does not allow for communication between the Board and the Associations and/or Service Units. A possible solution to minimize the length of time to gather input is to have each Association prepare their own 2-minute question and present it to the Board at the Annual Meeting. We recognize that the Board needs and wants to hear from the girls and volunteers more than just once a year. Although this may not be the exact solution to the issue, it would facilitate the communication between the Girls, volunteers and council.

Secondly, the Service Units should be empowered because they have the best understanding of what is going on in their respective areas. The Delegates should be elected from their specific Service Unit as they have a vested interest in what is happening and they can best represent their girls. The Association structure is a duplication of the Service Unit structure and its function should be re-evaluated.

Thirdly, each Service Unit should have at least 1 or more Teen girls as a delegate. In order to keep our girls interested in Girl Scouting, it is imperative that we listen to what the girls have to say. The bylaws should limit the term length for a girl delegate to 1 year, due to time allocation of the girls.

Finally, we feel that having two Forums a year, with representation from the Board, staff, delegates, and any volunteer, will only help to improve the communication between all parties. We would propose that anyone wishing to identify an issue submit the issue to council two weeks prior to the Forum so that the best person (whether that is a council or a Board member) can be notified to present a reply to the issue at the Forum and allow the delegates to take the information back to their Service Units.

ASSOCIATION 42: CENTRAL CITY-FRIENDSHIP
CHAIR: DELORES THURSTON

Association 42 would like to thank the Board for allowing us an opportunity to share our comments on our two-minute question for 2007.

We would like to start off by referencing our response to last year's two-minute question which was "The current Association structure is functional and adequate in terms of the levels and leadership." We also stated that "the large Associations should be broken down into smaller ones. Thereby allowing Association representatives more time to fulfill their corporate responsibilities and provide more valued time to girls and the volunteers." We stand by our response to last year's two-minute statement. While we do appreciate change and are aware of the differences and roles of the Service Unit and the Association, we feel that we should maintain the status quo and take steps to convey an understanding of the current process to the volunteers in positions within the Service Unit and Association. The council should take a more proactive role of improving the process of adequately training our volunteers. Since there seem to be a misunderstanding in other Associations, we need to make sure that everyone is knowledgeable of the functions and responsibilities of the Association and the Service Units before changing the process since many did not know or understand what was required.

Some of the problems with leaders not being trained is that they are assuming the roles left by former leaders and not being informed of what their total responsibilities are. They are not aware of the organizational structure, the meetings or what training is required once becoming a leader and/or volunteer. The council office is not always properly informed when a new leader takes over a troop. We are allowing volunteers to become leaders without enforcing training. This practice perpetuates itself on up the ladder to the association level. Training for all positions should be mandatory and enforced by the council.

ASSOCIATION 43: MID-EASTERAN WASHINGTON
CHAIR: DEBORAH BROWN

We value the opportunity to continue providing our input on a governance system for our council, GSCNC.

As we mentioned last year, Association 43 operates well under the current governance structure. Our association is composed of two service units and we enjoy meeting together at the Spring and Fall Association meetings to discuss policy and operational issues.

Generally we believe that by educating the members of the association of the functions of the Associations and Service Units. They would know that the Associations are the largest and most important policy-influencing groups within the GSCNC corporate structure and that the Service Unit provides the setting within which the primary services of a council (organizing troops/groups and providing direct services to girls and Girl Scout leaders) take place.

We have the following responses to the changes that we posed in the discussion guide:

- Holding delegate elections within Service Units based on girl membership will harm the service units with low girl membership. Maybe there could be a minimum number of delegates based on a certain level of membership.
- Periodic forms convened by the Board will increase Board member visibility to the membership. We envision these forums as a great opportunity for our Board members to dialogue with the members of GSCNC. However, there should be parameters around the 'periodic forums' including such things as the distribution of an agenda prior to the meeting; quorum requirements; minutes to reflect each discussion, etc.

And finally, we hope a new governance system will provide girls with an opportunity to participate in a formal business process that's common to the business world. It is great that currently girls can participate in the business meeting held in the comfort of their Association or in a bigger setting, like today.

ASSOCIATION 44: DC EAST OF ANACOSTIA
CHAIR: (VACANT)

Association 44 is ready for a change in the local association structure and would like to propose the following:

First, there needs to be a more thorough method of validating membership. If delegate selection methods continue to be based on membership, at any level, then we need to improve our current membership accounting system. This is as simple as council providing each unit with a printout of “current” enrollment and allowing for timely corrections. This would assist in insuring that our delegate quotas are correct and that delegate memberships are valid. It would assist product sales volunteers in validating Girl Scout enrollment, and more accurate membership verification would assist in the local tracking of longevity and service for awards and recognitions.

Association 44 would like to begin selecting delegates at the service unit level so that all units have representation; and we would like to decrease all delegate and association tenures to two years in an effort to increase volunteerism and accommodate the Teen Scouts. Furthermore, we would also like to institute the use of co-chairs at the association level, thereby decreasing the demands on a single individual.

On a broader scale, we would like council to consider a realignment of association boundaries in an effort to: pool financial and human resources; decrease the number of vacant volunteer positions by eliminating the “overlap” of association responsibilities; and improve the delivery of girl programs by balancing the have-and-have-nots, thereby strengthening the overall impact of our organization council-wide.

As a parting thought, Association 44 would like to recommend that council consider increasing the use of periodic interest group sessions and special council-wide forums for more timely feedback, instead of relying only on the association delegates to formulate responses to a single question once a year.

ASSOCIATION 50: ASHGROVE EAST
CHAIR: PAMELA JELINEK

Is GSCNC ready for a change in the association structure? Association 50, Ashgrove East, presented this question to its membership during February and March. The overwhelming response from the adults can be summed up in a single question: Why does this matter to us?

The average troop leader sees little connection between this two-minute question and how they serve girls. Delegates spent an inordinate amount of time explaining council structure and trying to make the uninteresting comprehensible. To paraphrase one volunteer: delegates are the feisty former leaders who have the time and energy to care about what is happening outside of the troop, the service unit or even outside the association. Delegates expressed the belief that the problems that exist will not be fixed by these changes.

Our volunteers and girls are eager to provide meaningful feedback on matters of importance to them. They are willing to go along with a change in structure, but many felt the matter had been predetermined.

Concrete suggestions from our membership:

- Elect delegates from the service units but give each service unit equal representation. Every service unit should have an equal voice and smaller voices should not be crowded out.
- Two-year delegate terms, staggering the terms between one experienced person and one new person.
- Hold forums exclusively for Teens.
- Membership was receptive to the idea of forums but want to be sure that any questions or concerns to be addressed are sent to the delegates well in advance so delegates are able to speak on behalf of their membership and not their own opinion. Additionally, the membership should be allowed to suggest possible topics for the agenda.
- Invest in a good software survey program and directly ask the troops for input into questions.

Concerns from our membership:

- First, in a forum structure, can all be heard?
- Find a way to better involve girls in governance. We have struggled to find girl delegates both because of the spring break calendar and because girls want to actually be involved in something that requires them to act, and with that action, feel they can make a difference.
- No service units in our membership have girls participating at the service unit level. If delegates are going to represent their service units, there needs to be a way to hear directly from girls. For the girls, teen groups such as our TOGA may be a better way to recruit.
- Avoid creating yet another task for service unit managers. They should not have to find the delegates or be responsible for providing delegates with information. Over and over we heard that all of our volunteers are stretched thin.
- Lastly, develop effective ways to change policy.

ASSOCIATION 51: ASHGROVE WEST
ACTING CHAIR: JIM KRAFTCHAK

The issue isn't are we ready – because we are more than ready for changes in Association 51! We want our Association to be able to evolve into a more useful entity for organizing and coordinating with our local Scouting community, and in linking our community to the council and Board of Directors. We don't need oversight of the service units; we do need a way of coordinating community-based strategies across the service units. We like the idea of Service Unit-elected delegates representing our Association at discussion forums. We will have the chance to make the delegates real representatives of our Girl Scouts – not just a name to be checked-off at the Annual Meeting.

Our association needs to be able to support our local troops, who are the basic building blocks of our Girl Scouting community, and our Service Units, the local administrative structure of our troops. The association needs to be able to create a framework for discussing policy, program, and operational needs. This includes development of programs that address the special needs of our local Girl Scouts, providing opportunities for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors or Teens from across our association to join in Girl Scouting events.

Why do we think that strengthening the association is a good idea? Enlightened self interest! A stronger association provides support and opportunities for our local Girl Scouting community, which improves our ability to recruit new Girl Scouts – because we have such a great program close to home! A stronger association can be instrumental in retaining Girl Scouts and most importantly, leaders and adult volunteers. Without the adult leadership, we can't have a Girl Scouting program for our daughters, granddaughters, nieces and neighbors.

We have a chance to create a strong and enduring mechanism for progressing adult volunteers from troop leadership to council support – and the association could be the structure for creating this ladder. Let's dare to be imaginative!

ASSOCIATION 52: SOUTH CENTRAL FAIRFAX
ACTING CHAIR: SUE HANSEN

Good Morning! My name is Sarah Mahan from Association 52. We asked ourselves, “Are we ready for a change in our local Association structure?” We decided the answer is “Yes, we are ready for some changes in the role of our Association.”

We decided that:

1. Associations need to be flexible and be able to define themselves as the needs of their area dictate.
2. The policy-influencing role of the association should be given to the Service Unit. Associations should continue to exist as an operational level of the council to assist with program and/or fund-raising delivery systems.
3. The Association Leader would be an administrative volunteer, much like a Service Unit Manager.
4. Some Association roles could be absorbed by other levels of our organization. Three examples would be Press Representative, Nominating and referral duties and Recognitions. The Press Representative could become an area volunteer function. Nominating and Referral duties could be at either the area or the Service Unit level. Service Units could send award nominations directly to the Council Recognitions Panel or continue to send them through an Area Recognitions Committee.
5. The Service Units should either elect or appoint their own delegates to the Council Annual Meeting. We found benefits to each method and decided that decision could come after further discussion, perhaps at a Fall Forum.

We have several suggestions relating to delegates and their duties:

1. We decided the number of delegates allotted should either continue to be based on girl membership alone OR each Service Unit could have two delegates no matter what their girl member numbers are, perhaps having one adult and one Teen Girl Scout, OR a combination of the two methods. Again, this could be a forum discussion/decision.

2. Delegates (and Alternate Delegates, if the Service Unit wishes) would be members of the Service Unit Team.
3. Members who are not part of Service Units, such as Juliettes and Trainers and other non-affiliated Girl Scouts must be represented, if delegates are based in the Service Units. These non-affiliated girls and adults could be represented through the groups with which they participate – trainers, the various teen organizations, or members-at-large. Non-affiliated individuals could only be represented by one of the groups with which they participate. An area Delegate-at-Large could be elected or appointed by the Area Manager in consultation with the Field Directors.
4. Association meetings would be replaced by Area forums twice a year with delegates attending an Annual Meeting as they do now. The forum would include open discussions among the delegates, alternate delegates, and with the Board of Directors' representatives attending. The forums would be mandatory for delegates and open to all members.
5. Delegates and Alternate Delegates should be elected for one-year terms with a six-year limit for adults and a four-year limit for Teen Girl Scouts. After a one-year absence, former Delegates and Alternate Delegates would again be eligible to serve.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our suggestions and ideas.

ASSOCIATION 53: MOUNT VERNON
CHAIR: RUTH DRICKEY

Association 53 enthusiastically supports the proposal to “fast track” changes to the Association structure and mission. We offer these suggestions as you work to refine the details of the proposed changes.

Under the current system, delegates are expected to represent the needs of their entire Association. They are trained and attend meetings to prepare themselves to attend the Annual Meeting and to bring policy related proposals to the Board. While this is an important responsibility, the fact is that not many policy proposals are ever suggested and the delegate’s duties at the Annual Meeting consist primarily of validating a slate of nominees. Delegates elected at the Service Unit will have a clearer picture of which they are representing and the issues important to the Troops and their Service Unit. Even experienced volunteers did not always “know” many people outside their own Service Unit and may have felt uncomfortable trying to represent, as a delegate, the more diverse issues of the Association. The importance of the delegate is also heightened by their involvement in ongoing forum meetings throughout the year, better ensuring that any policy proposals that are made have a more direct and efficient conduit to the Board.

We suggest that if a Service Unit is unable to fill a delegate’s space at a Forum Meeting or Annual Meeting, that the Association Chair continue to be able to fill the vacancy for that meeting from the alternate delegates of a neighboring Service Unit. This would ensure full representation at these important meetings. However, unlike the current system, the space would revert immediately after the meeting to its home Service Unit.

We suggest that the number of delegates be based on a cross between equal representation and representation based on size; specifically, each Service Unit should have, at a minimum, one Teen Delegate and one Adult Delegate, and one additional delegate for every 100 members. Additionally, changing the term of office to two years with a maximum of three concurrent terms would make it easier to attract Teen members to take on the responsibility of becoming a delegate.

Currently, Service Units and Associations, through their delegates, are given the opportunity to speak to the Board primarily in their response to the “two-minute question.” Anyone who has ever attended an Annual Meeting knows that many people work very hard for months to give fresh and innovative ideas and to craft their comments carefully into a two-minute response. Then, at the meeting itself, the responses from the 20 or so associations are usually very similar with just a few differences between them. While it is somewhat gratifying that “your” ideas are echoed by others, it is also disheartening to find that your unique and fresh ideas were not that unique. Does it really

take that many people to find a good answer to the question? and isn't hearing it 20 or so times overkill? As we continue to grow in size as a council, this will only worsen.

Perhaps the most frustrating thing about the "Two-minute Question" system is the fact that the subject is completely top-fed. There simply is not time for whatever issues the Service Units and Associations might like to address. With a new system of Forum meetings held throughout the year, "grass roots" concerns could be heard. Certainly these meetings would start with agenda items of general concern, but delegates to these meetings could ask to place other topics on the agenda as well. We suggest that the Forum Meetings be held in the current geographical areas and that attendance include Delegates, Association Chairs and Service Unit Managers. Then at the Annual Meeting, instead of repetitive two-minute responses, reports could be given highlighting the discussions at the Forum Meetings.

Finally, we applaud the reconfiguration because it seems it will cut back on much duplication of effort. In many cases the same few people are doing jobs in the current structure at both Association and Service Unit level. This taxes them to attend extra meetings and do more work. A careful realignment that reduces duplication and saves the time and effort of our valuable volunteers will let them use their time more productively and further show just how valuable we know their contributions are.

ASSOCIATION 54: CENTRAL FAIRFAX COUNTY
CHAIR: CYNTHIA KOSHATKA

Members of Association 54 value the democratic process, and we value our adult volunteers at both the Service Unit and Association levels. We are concerned about the proposed structure for Associations that:

- leaves questions about the democratic process unanswered,
- may burden Service Unit Managers with additional tasks, and
- may push associations to offer programs that Service Units have neither requested nor want.

We want to hear about council bylaw changes before we commit to structure change. What will be the process for selecting delegates, for Service Units that do not have managers, for quorum, for a local Nominating and Referral committee to forward names of qualified candidates for council positions? Service Units do not have an opportunity for all members to gather together for an election. How then could we reach all of our members beyond those who currently attend Service Unit meetings? We oppose APPOINTING delegates: if council staff appoints Service Unit Managers (SUMs) and SUMs appoint delegates, the voice of the volunteer membership might be constrained as a result. We believe that a two-year term for delegates is more efficient because of delegate turnover with three-year terms.

We are concerned about adding tasks to the long list that already exists for Service Unit Managers. The tasks of recruiting, electing, and training delegates are time-consuming, and some SUMs are not interested in taking this on.

Service Units value the current system of association coordination of product sales and girl and adult recognitions, but they are NOT interested in having more programs at the association level. They want to keep their traditions for encampment and Thinking Day. Girls want association opportunities for leadership, service projects, and Gold award mentoring, but they are more comfortable working with adults from their Service Units whom they know and see regularly.

We love the idea of direct dialogue between elected delegates and the Board of Directors, but Girl Scout Forums could occur NOW without restructuring associations. We want a democratic process where we TRULY listen to the girls and adults. How about a curriculum to educate adults about how to listen to the girls before presenting the adult opinions? Also, does GSUSA want to hear our opinion about the proposed age and level changes for next year?

In summary, don't ask us to sign the mortgage papers without giving us the interest rate. We don't want to overhaul our whole structure without more concrete information. Association 54 says "no" to the question and recommends a pilot program involving two Associations to test proposed changes for success. Thank you.

**ASSOCIATION 55: LITTLE RIVER
CHAIR: ROXIE NICOLL**

Good morning, I am Arielle Balicki, a Senior Girl Scout with Troop 675, speaking for the Little River Association. We support the proposed changes to move the election of delegates and alternate delegates to the Service Units and in holding open forums during the year. With closer relationships with girls and troop leaders who form the foundation of the Girl Scout movement, delegates and alternates will be better able to explain their roles to and solicit concerns, opinions and suggestions from the Service Units.

Through the open forums, delegates will have direct contact with the Board of Directors, which may result in a deeper investment and ownership in the Girl Scout movement.

We need to remember that girls come first in Girl Scouts. Our association believes that the opinions and thoughts of Girls are very important. We love and respect all of our adult volunteers, especially the legacies, who brought our council to the strong and successful position it is in today.

However, we believe that the Board of Directors should hear the voices of girls, troop leaders and adults Girl Scouts who have direct contact with girls. They are in the best position to know what girls need to be successful, not only as Girl Scouts, but also in the world. By having the delegates and alternates come from the Service Units, we will have representation from girls as well as from volunteers with direct knowledge of what impacts girls.

The key to making changes in the council's governance is flexibility. Perhaps in addition to those elected by the Service Unit, there could be some at-large delegates and alternates, to represent Juliettes, as well as adult volunteers without direct contact with the girls. They could be nominated through the Council's Nomination committee.

We also suggest an investment in technology to allow on-line chat rooms to allow girls to talk among themselves and on-line forums to voice their concerns.

ASSOCIATION 56: DIFFICULT RUN
CHAIR: CAROL CROSS

Yes – Association 56 supports the proposed change to choose delegates directly from service units. We envision delegate nominees being volunteers acquired in the same manner as other Service Unit team positions and not requiring a nominating committee. Rather than formal elections, these nominees could be simply “confirmed” by a vote of Service Unit meeting attendees.

Base the number of adult delegates on Service Unit membership but facilitate filling the slots by reducing their number. Simply raising the member-to-delegate ratio would accomplish this. In addition, allot each Service Unit one girl delegate and allow for “at-large” delegates apart from Service Units.

We also endorse the proposed forums as the primary means of dialog between the Board and members. Key word: DIALOG. No more two-minute question - let the results of the forums take its place. These forums should be a “sounding-board” for ideas from both Board and members and should include means for agenda input from delegates.

Girl participation in governance of our council is vital. As Juliette Low said: “Ask the girls!” Separate GIRL forums would serve to effectively obtain and utilize their uniquely GIRL perspective.

Forums should be open to any and all (delegates or members) who want to attend with ample advanced notification of forum topics. Locations should be geographically accessible and large enough to accommodate all. Forum participation could be further enhanced with use of teleconferencing and web-chats.

There should be no quorum required at the forums. Those that do attend are the ones *meant* to be there. Formal votes should be reserved for the Annual and any special meetings requiring a quorum, with provision for proxy voting.

We need to be more considerate of our volunteers’ time and resources. Only one forum per year should be *mandatory*, with the option for more as needed. Other, face-to-face delegate meetings could be kept to a minimum with liberal use of internet technology.

Thank you for considering our input on the proposed changes in our local governance.

ASSOCIATION 60: PRIDE OF POTOMAC
CHAIR: TYNA GAYLOR

Yes, Association 60 is ready to embrace some changes in the association structure. These changes should be designed to better connect Brownies and Juniors and their leaders to the benefits and responsibilities of membership in GSCNC. To that end, we support electing delegates at the Service Unit level to increase ownership at the base leadership level. We recommend training and policy discussion at the association level for community building and to better understand how to represent our local association membership. We also recommend a short and snappy on governance for service unit managers to present to increase adult ownership in the Girl Scout movement.

Our association works pretty well so we don't really understand the extent and dysfunction of other associations. At the same time, we believe that working associations will not be damaged by governance changes, so are comfortable with the ideas proposed.

We want the GSCNC leadership pyramid to be a real pyramid, with a logical operational relationship between membership, troops, service units, associations, areas and GSCNC. Speaking of areas, Pride of the Potomac does not believe it is reasonable to place us in an area structure that is more rural and suburban than urban. The council office best serves our needs, not a satellite office. It is easier for volunteers to drive to council during rush hour. We believe we can best be served in an area that more accurately reflects our urban needs. As our council grows and changes, perhaps a new area that comprises the urban core would be beneficial.

The three-year delegate terms work, but we think that two-year terms are optimal by allowing a year to become acquainted with one's responsibilities and then a year to contribute. Three years sounds like a long time to commit and we think both adult and girl volunteers may respond better to two-year terms. This is our by-laws revision recommendation.

The importance of alternate delegates must be recognized and maintained. Similar to the judicial system and alternate jurors, they are on call at all times and, in order for them to fulfill their roles, they must be as involved as delegates in understanding the issues and in gathering the views of their membership. So, when GSCNC has forums, which we also support, we believe space must be provided for alternates to attend. For that matter, we believe interested members should also be able to attend as on-lookers in a visitors section, perhaps.

We think the size of Service Units should be reviewed. Service units that are too small may find it difficult to attract sufficient volunteers to fill all the roles needed to bring the programs and services to its local members. At the same time, we fully support activities at the association level because it brings girls and adults together from our larger

community and we believe this is beneficial for diversity, inclusiveness and to appreciate the scope of the Girl Scout movement.

ASSOCIATION 70: GOOSE CREEK
CHAIR: PATTY PETERSON

Association 70 supports many of the suggested changes, but does have some reservations.

We feel that the association's role in representing its members to council has become somewhat obsolete. With the increased use of the internet and email, members are getting more immediate action and resolution of problems. There is little reason to work through the association to deal with issues.

The Service Unit is the most direct point of contact for most members. Most Service Unit Managers tend to turn to the office staff with questions and concerns. This is more time expedient than waiting for the spring or fall association meeting.

Delegates and Alternate Delegates who participated in the recent Forums expressed their pleasure with this format. They enjoyed the opportunity to interact with the other delegates, discussing issues, and hearing varied opinions and reactions. There was a real feeling that this was the first time the delegates truly had the opportunity to debate issues. They would like the Board to be more directly available at this local level.

They suggest that future forums provide time for the delegates to meet before the Board members arrive. A possible model for the Forum could be the Open Space discussion, except that small group discussion topics could be determined by a list of issues submitted in advance. The meeting site would need to have smaller meeting spaces to which groups could adjourn for more focused discussions. Small groups and more relevant issues might increase the involvement of our Teen Scouts. The small groups could delineate the key issues to present to the Board members at the end of the meeting.

Many Association Chairs have dealt with the issue of delegates, elected in the fall, failing to attend the Annual Meeting. We agree that representatives elected directly from their Service Units would feel more responsibility to attend the meetings and report back to their members. A secondary benefit might be the increased involvement of our older girls.

We support the idea of delegate and alternate delegate positions becoming appointed, rather than elected, positions.

There are some concerns that this new method of governance will require more time, and more meetings to attend, of our delegates. We are not convinced that we can rely on this depth of commitment from our delegates.

The Association still serves a purpose in the operational role. We feel that local area divisions are the best way to organize product sales and fundraising (ie: SHARE). There is motivation in the mild competition generated by local rivalries.

The Associations generally provide local program opportunities. They also provide the leadership for organization of Teen activities and events.

Recognition of volunteers is best done at the local level as well.

A major concern is the additional responsibilities being placed on our Service Unit Managers. Although we believe that direct representation from each Service Unit will be most responsive to the needs of our membership, we suspect our Service Unit Managers may feel overwhelmed by the need to hold elections, provide reports to council, ensure that delegates attend Forums, and provide time at meetings for reports.

ASSOCIATION 80: PORTS OF PRINCE WILLIAM
CHAIR: FRAN PHOENIX

We are content with the way the Association and the Service Units are operating in our area. Our fall and spring meetings are well attended, our adults and girls are recognized, and we are represented at the Annual Meeting.

We can be ready for change if necessary. We would like each Service Unit to be responsible for its own delegates. Two delegates per Service Unit make sense to us with at least one of those delegates being a Teen Scout. These delegates would serve for one year.

The forums this year have been a huge hit with us. We would like to change the format of the Annual Meeting to include forums. After signing in, delegates would join a group and discuss any topic important to them. A recorder would report back during the meeting itself. The Board would really get a sense of what is on our mind! The Teen Scouts would be encouraged to form their own groups. That way what is on their minds will also be heard.

Association 80's major concern is the line of communication between us and the Board.

We would make the Fall Association Meetings a forum. From this meeting, each association would be able to come up with what is of concern to the majority of their membership. Then each association would have their own personal two-minute question. The question would be the same each year: "What do you want the Board of Directors to know?" Once our question is presented at the Annual Meeting, we would expect a response to our own question rather than to the two-minute questions in general. We want to feel that we really have been heard!!

If time is a concern, we would eliminate most of the Treasurer's Report since we all get it ahead of time. There could be time for questions and concerns, but, for the most part, all that people care about is that we are solvent! Also some of the "time filler" speeches could be eliminated.

To quote a young lady at one of the forums: "Is change always good? Sometimes too much change drives people away." We in Association 80 feel that some tweaking may be necessary, but don't feel that the original association is broken. We just want to know that we have been heard!

Thank you!

ASSOCIATION 90: PIEDMONT
CHAIR: DIANNE CRANE

Traditionally, Association 90 has turned to our older girls for a speaker to present our two-minute response. This year, however, we believe it necessary to underscore our overall statement by standing an adult before you.

For two years now, the two-minute question has not been of value to the girls, the very foundation of our Girl Scouting program. As one of our girl delegates pointed out at a recent planning session, “We only have the girls in the program for a relatively short time, so why not make every moment of their experience count?”

Our Association is strong. We are open to appropriate change, but we want to maintain our focus on the girls.

Deciding issues of policy is not why we volunteer. Of course we would like a voice, but for the majority of us, our focus is on programs and operational concerns.

We suggest that council establish a dedicated group of volunteers who are really interested in policy and organize them to attend meetings and discussion forums. They would then report back to Service Units and Associations.

Include online forums where people interested in policy issues can log on and express their opinions. Then, share the results with everyone! We understand that council wants feedback from the grassroots level, and one of the best ways in our diverse council is an internet forum – especially for girls!

Speaking of the girls – which is why we are all here! – we suggest that council give the girl members of the Board of Directors a more active role in grassroots communication. Involve them in policy decisions as appropriate, and encourage opportunities for them to actively participate in the planning of council events. Activities planned by council are not always age-appropriate in terms of interest level for the targeted audience, especially older girls. Girls would like more input on programs and operations. Let’s use “GAP” to their advantage: more programming for older girls **designed** by older girls!

Association 90 believes in the association structure. The problems some associations seem to be having appear to be a result of a lack of leadership, not of the association structure. council needs to address the leadership issue, rather than dismantle what works for the majority.

We suggest that council establish a mentor program for associations that do not function well. Turn to the associations that **are** functioning for assistance!

We suggest that associations use the “Two-minute Question” at their fall and spring meetings, as a forum to discuss issues pertinent to their own operations and programs. This will enhance the value of the Association meeting for all participants.