

California lawmakers lecture Boy Scouts on discriminatory practices

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

Stressing to millions of boys the value of honesty, loyalty, honor and good deeds is not enough to win a commendation from the California Assembly – if you exclude gays and atheists.

Boy Scouts of America, one of the last major youth organizations to deny membership because of sexual or religious views, was applauded Tuesday for its good works but ripped by a legislative committee as hurtful to many families.

The Assembly dust-up comes in the wake of national headlines stemming from the ouster last month of an Ohio Cub Scout leader, Jennifer Tyrrell, 32, because she is lesbian.

Tuesday's controversy also marks the latest jab by a Democratic-controlled Legislature against a private organization that won a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2000 ensuring its free-speech right to exclude gays and lesbians from membership.

"The continued discriminatory policy of the Scouts is deeply offensive to me," said Assemblyman Mike Feuer, a Los Angeles Democrat who chairs the Judiciary Committee that met Tuesday.

The slap at the Boy Scouts came on the same day that the Senate's Judiciary Committee passed a bill banning minors from participating in controversial therapy programs to change their sexual orientations, and requiring adults to sign consent forms indicating they understand potential dangers.

Friction over the Boy Scouts was sparked by a proposed commendation, Assembly Concurrent Resolution 94, to applaud

the group for its commitment to train youths in responsible citizenship, character development, leadership and public service.

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