



New Council Fee

Information for Scouting America volunteers, parents

Beginning January 1, 2026, the Buffalo Trace Council will implement a new annual Council fee for each registered youth member of Scouting America.

The Council fee of \$80 will take effect as part of annual renewals and new memberships in 2026. This change is necessary because program expenses are outpacing revenues.

The Q&A below provides additional details, but in short, this fee is essential to sustain the programming and administrative support required to deliver quality Scouting experiences. Most other councils already have similar fees in place, and we delayed this step as long as possible.

This decision was not made lightly, and we remain committed to ensuring that the value of Scouting continues for all families.

Below is more information about the fee and its purpose.

What will the new fee pay for?

The fee will go toward the operating budget of the Buffalo Trace Council (BTC) to support the actions and activities to make local Scouting possible.

Program-related expenses include:

- Program logistics, execution, and supplies
- Training for volunteers and leaders
- Guidance and support for units, with support from Council Staff
- Recognitions and advancements

There are also expenses related to operating the Council itself, including:

- Staff salaries and benefits
- Facility costs for the Eykamp Scout Center (utilities, maintenance, insurance, etc.)
- Operational expenses (IT, postage, web hosting, telephones, etc.)

All of these costs add up. Last year (2024), the total Council operating budget, divided by the number of Scouts participating, worked out to about \$440 per registered Scout.

How has the Council raised money up to now?

For many years, the main sources of Council revenue have been:

- The Council's portion of popcorn sales
- Special events (such as Distinguished Citizen Award banquets)

- Grants from foundations and trusts
- Friends of Scouting, which directly benefits programs and provides financial assistance for qualifying Scouts
- Event sponsorships have also helped; the BTC is further developing sponsorship opportunities.

Why isn't this enough anymore?

Several models related to BTC funding have changed in the past few years.

- Only 50 of 110 units in the BTC sold popcorn in 2025.
 - Of the approximately 2,000 Scouts in the BTC, only about 500 – or 1 in 4 Scouts – are selling popcorn.
- 25% of all units welcome a Friends of Scouting presentation in their units to request financial support from families.
 - Of this group, less than 30% of all families support the BTC with Family Friends of Scouting donations. This group totals approximately 150 donors.
- Together, this means that more than half of all units aren't providing financial support to the BTC.
- Opportunities for grant funding have changed substantially
 - Some grants that the Council have reliably received for years have changed their eligibility models, leading to six-figure funding losses both of the past two years.
 - Recent changes in government and national grant funding have resulted in more organizations applying for fewer available grant dollars.

On the Council side, expenses have been reduced in several ways in the past few years. Personnel vacancies from the past year, as well as several part time positions, haven't been filled. Also, under leadership of the Old Buzzards Committee, maintenance and repairs at the Eykamp Scout Center are handled in-house by volunteer Scouters and Scouts.

However, even in light of these reductions and cost savings, current funding models aren't keeping up with expenses.

What portion of the \$85 national annual membership fee [that I already pay] goes to the Council?

- \$0. Annual membership fees are exclusively sent to Scouting America for enrollment, program development, administrative expenses, and insurance.

Are other Councils charging fees like this?

- The BTC is 1 of 17 councils in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan.
- Of those 17 councils, 13 have established Council fees in recent years to support operations; seven of those Councils collect fees in the range of \$60-\$85.

When will these fees be paid?

- This total fee of \$165 (national and local council fees) will be due at the same time as each Scout's annual membership renewal, or for a new member to join.

What will happen with requests for financial assistance and camperships?

- Assistance provided per individual will likely decrease from over \$200 per request to close to \$100.
- BTC had budgeted \$43,000 in support for 2025; going forward, we will not be able to provide as many uniforms and total financial support packages for families.
- We ask units to start uniform banks by reaching out to prior members to share outgrown uniforms as an alternative method to support our Scouts.

How can Scouts and their unit (Pack, Troop or Crew) offset this expense?

- Participating in the popcorn sale is one of the best ways to offset Scouting expenses while also supporting the Council.
 - When a Scout works a two-hour storefront popcorn sale, they would typically earn enough unit-level proceeds to cover this fee.
- Units could opt to pay for the fee up front and Scouts can reimburse the unit over time.
 - Reimbursement could also mean that the Scout participates in unit fundraisers, whether through shifts covered or sales totals.

The Value of Scouting Remains

The decision to add this fee was not made lightly, and followed many challenging discussions and considerations. The Board and staff acknowledge that expenses are increasing for everyone in many areas of life.

It is our hope and belief that the value of Scouting will continue to outweigh the costs and challenges.

As your child(ren):

- Gain life experiences not available in *any* other program...
- Make friends with fellow Scouts (whose parents likely share many of your values)...
- Build grit, confidence, and resilience that will serve them throughout life...
- Develop interests and skills that can foster future careers...
- Earn their Eagle Scout rank, with measurable and immeasurable lifetime benefits...

...we hope that these benefits outweigh this added cost as you consider which activities to invest in for your child(ren).

Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm for the Buffalo Trace Council, Scouting America. We will continue to communicate with you as parents, our leaders and our chartered partners.

If you have questions, please contact John G. Harding, Scout Executive,
administration@buffalotracecouncil.org.