

NEWS

Jury Says Philly Can't Evict Boy Scouts For Policy Against Gays

By Jonathan Trager

A federal jury has barred the city of Philadelphia from evicting a local Boy Scouts chapter which uses a city-owned building but has a policy prohibiting homosexuals from serving in leadership positions.

The jury verdict was handed down on June 23, nine days after the proceedings began. The jury decided the city's action to evict the association from the Bruce S. Marks Scout Resource Center in downtown Philadelphia violated the First Amendment rights of the local Scouts group, called the Cradle of Liberty.

Despite the verdict, Judge Ronald Buckwalter told jurors the city's anti-

discrimination policy is "principled" and said he hoped the two "honorable institutions" could work out a reasonable resolution.

Jason Gosselin, attorney for the Boy Scouts, said there were "some complex First Amendment issues at stake" in the case.

"I was very pleased the jury did the hard work of paying attention during the testimony, trying to understand the issues, and then apply the law to the facts to the law," told USAE. "Obviously, we're delighted with the result because even when the government is not directly telling you to change membership policy, it doesn't mean it's not violating the Constitution."

The city had purchased about half

an acre of land in the 1920s for the Boy Scouts to build its headquarters building and for which they would pay \$1 per year in rent. The city would own the building, while the association would pay to maintain it.

That arrangement had served both parties well until the present decade, Gosselin said.

"Their position was 'we don't have to subsidize a discriminatory organization,'" Gosselin explained. "But the community benefits the Boy Scouts provide are tremendous, and they built [the building] and maintain it with their own money."

In May 2008, the Boy Scouts of America filed a lawsuit to stop the city from evicting them or from charging them

\$200,000 per year in rent.

A furor had erupted amongst some city residents over the national organizations policy prohibiting "known or avowed homosexuals" from serving in leadership positions.

The city filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit that was denied. In November 2009, a preliminary injunction was instituted to allow the Boy Scouts to remain in the building until the case could be decided in court.

Gosselin told USAE that it's possible the city will try to appeal, but it's harder to overturn a jury verdict than a judge's ruling.

"What we would like to do is sit down with the city and figure out a way to put this behind us," Gosselin said.

ACOM Wants To Celebrate Service Managers

By Rebecca Keister

What are you doing for your convention service managers this fall?

The Association for Convention Operations Management (ACOM) is asking members to put on their creative hats to host local celebrations for its National Celebrate Services Day on Sept. 16 and will reward the most unique event with a complementary 2011 Annual Conference registration.

To be held Sept. 16, 2010, National Celebrate Services Day is meant to showcase the importance of convention services to the overall meeting experience and to stimulate camaraderie among industry professionals.

ACOM is asking members to host events unique to their area, including networking receptions, themed events, social or community outreach meetings or social activities.

"364 days of the year, CSMs are devoted to other organization's events - this is their day to shine," said Marilyn Healey, CMP, ACOM President. "National Celebrate Services Day will truly help showcase the importance of CSMs as partners to meeting planners, give members the opportunity to connect with other CSMs in their city and provide them with an outlet to celebrate their successes."

ACOM is asking members to host events unique to their area, including networking receptions, themed events, social or community outreach meetings or social activities.

ACOM will provide members with the tools to host a local event, and said the intent is for member venues to rally and provide space for events without cost.

Members are encouraged to notify ACOM as early as possible about their local event in order to be included in their effort to promote the events. For more information on National Celebrate Services Day or to host an event, visit www.acomonline.org.

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