Elation, alarm at end of Boy Scouts' ban on gays

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SALT LAKE CITY — The lifting of the Boy Scouts of America's ban on gay adult leaders prompted some gay Eagle Scouts to quickly rejoin the movement on Tuesday. But the Mormon church — the nation's largest sponsor of Scout units — warned that it may split away to form a global scouting organization of its own.

The contrasting reactions followed the BSA national executive board's 45-12 vote on Monday to lift the nationwide ban while allowing church-sponsored Scout units to continue excluding gay adults.

Across the country, scores of gay Eagle Scouts signed forms with the advocacy group Scouts for Equality, expressing interest in rejoining the Boy Scouts as volunteers.

Among them was Charles Spain, a 56-year-old attorney in Houston who had not worn a Scout uniform since his post-college years as an in-the-closet Scout employee before he entered law school.

AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

In this June 28 file photo, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts prepare to lead marchers while waving rainbow-colored flags at the 41st annual Pride Parade in Seattle, two days after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized gay marriage nationwide.

On Tuesday morning, he registered as an adult leader with the local Scout troop that his 13-year-old son belongs to, then hurried out to buy a uniform and posted a photo of it on his Facebook page.

"I haven't worn a Scout uniform in 30 years," said Spain. "I support and believe in the Scouting program. It's the best youth program that's ever been invented."

The mood was different at the Salt Lake City headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which described itself as "deeply troubled" by the BSA's decision to lift the nationwide ban.

Just two weeks earlier, Mormon leaders indicated they were comfortable with the pending policy change. But in a strongly worded statement issued after Monday's final vote, Mormon officials described the admission of openly gay leaders as "inconsistent with the doctrines of the Church."

One possibility, church officials suggested, would be for the Mormons to form their own worldwide scouting movement.

The Mormons' statement noted that the church has members in 170 nations, many of them without scouting programs. "Those worldwide needs combined with this vote by the BSA National Executive Board will be carefully reviewed by the leaders of the Church in the weeks ahead," the statement added.

At Boy Scout headquarters in Texas, reaction to the Mormons' declaration was muted.

The BSA issued its own statement expressing appreciation for its long relationship with the Mormon church, and asserting, "America's youth are better off when they are in Scouting."

A conservative activist in Utah, Gayle Ruzicka, applauded the Mormons' tough reaction and noted that the church already ran its own scouting-style program for young women.

"There's not any reason why the church can't start their own boys' program — one that will teach the same things," she said.

Brad Daw, a Republican legislator in Utah who's been involved in Scouting since he was 11, said he was disheartened by the BSA vote to allow gay leaders, but also saddened about the "pretty big hint" by church leaders of a Mormon exodus from Boy Scouting.

Given that most units in Utah are Mormon-affiliated, Daw said, being part of the BSA is "an opportunity for us to welcome boys from other faiths to be part of the Scouts."

The Mormon church — which serves more than 427,000 boys in nearly 38,000 scout units — still opposes gay marriage and believes homosexuality is a sin. But the religion's leaders have shifted their tone on gay rights in recent years, away from harsh rhetoric and toward compassion and acceptance of gays and lesbians.

The church was deeply involved in compromise legislation enacted in Utah in March that extends nondiscrimination protections to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people, while providing exemptions for religious groups and for the Boy Scouts.

CAMERAS: Edmiston would have liked DPSST to create the standards

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"The in-car cameras essentially are regulated by industry standard," he said. "There is no legislation that says this is how it will be deployed. A camera's a camera. Why are we making this distinction about body cameras?"

Roberts said he has spoken with other chiefs who have stopped using body cameras since the legislation was passed.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston agreed that the new regulations will deter other agencies from implementing body cameras, but he said his department will continue to use them. He said, although the bill was a "good compromise" compared to the initial proposals, he was not overly happy with it.

The department began mandating that patrol officers wear body cameras and record all traffic stops and field interviews about three and a half months ago. Edmiston said he does not plan to change the policy he drafted then because it complies with the new regulations. He said a work group was trying to develop a standardized policy, at which point he may modify Hermiston's policy.

Edmiston said he would have preferred that the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training developed the policy. He said the legislative mandates in the bill are "setting the table for future legislation," which would prevent officers from using their discretion.

"(House Bill) 2571 bothers me because it starts to infringe on officer discretion, and I think once we go there, you're going to have nothing but a bunch of robots out here that cannot operate in the gray, which — like it or not, call it what it is — a lot of what police do is in the gray because we're looking for what's reasonable," he said. "If you want police officers that (operate in) black and white, you're not going to like them. It's not going to be fun for anybody."

Edmiston said he was pleased that the law did not require officers to record their entire shift. The department purchased 15 cameras and 750 gigabytes of data storage per year in a five-year contract for a total of about $70,000. Edmiston said, in a little more than a quarter of a year, 272 gigabytes of data were generated when the four patrol officers on duty at any given time were only recording their interactions with people.

Edmiston said, in principle, he is opposed to the exemption of the recordings from public disclosure. He said, however, editing the video to blur the faces is extremely time consuming, and many of the recordings would pertain to pending criminal matters, which would not be released until after a trial anyway.

"The concept of keeping stuff from the public is difficult for me to swallow because, frankly, those days are over," he said. "If it's a matter that's pending, the person deserves a right to a fair trial."

FLOOD: City crews saw no damage to nearby streets

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said a family member he sent to get them was not able to fetch them in time. "I wasn't even mad about it," he said of the broken window, which has since been covered with plywood.

Garcia said he and his brother Chris do not currently have insurance for the shop. But he said they will invest in it after the fire. He called the incident an "eye-opener."

Next door, Sister's Cafe co-owner Rosemary Garcia reported extensive water damage to her shop's floors that prohibited her from reopening until Monday. There was minimal smoke and water damage to a few other Main Street buildings.

Public Works Superintendent Jeff Brown said streets around the old city hall building do not seem to be damaged in any way.

POT SALES: Walla Walla shop will open next month

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edibles.

Because they have been banned, there are no dispensaries in Umatilla or Morrow counties. Many cities, including Hermiston and Pendleton, have banned dispensaries as well.

The nearest medical dispensary in Oregon is in La Grande. According to the *La Grande Observer*, its city council will discuss at next week's meeting whether to ban the pre-sale of recreational marijuana in the city.

A retail marijuana shop will open in Walla Walla in August, according to the *Union-Bulletin*.