

To Girl Scout Chief Executive Officer Bonnie Barczykowski, the National Board of Directors: President Karen Layng, First Vice President Jeanne Bickford, Second Vice President Noorain Khan, Treasurer Valarie Gelb, Secretary Rachel Walton, and the National Board Members-at-Large;

My name is Autumn Pepper Rhodes. I am a Girl Scout Ambassador completing my thirteenth and last year of Girl Scouting as part of the Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida Council. I have a passion for aviation and became a private pilot my junior year of high school at the age of 17. I am currently working on my Gold Award project, *Girls Who Soar*, where my efforts are channeled into encouraging, educating, and inspiring girls in my community to pursue aviation.

I decided to become a pilot when I was ten years old. I had my first discovery flight with Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chapter 66 and immediately knew flight would be my future. When I was eleven, my Girl Scout troop went camping and attended an Aviation Discovery Day at the Sun-n-Fun campus in Lakeland, Florida. While there were multiple Boy Scout troops present, my troop was the only Girl Scout troop there. One of the activities provided were free discovery flights in a small aircraft. While there were multiple Boy Scouts lined up to fly without parents present, only the girls who had a parent onsite were eligible to fly, as flights in a small aircraft were not allowed per the Girl Scout Safety Checkpoints.

Many people, especially adults laughed when I said I wanted to be a pilot, but their comments sparked a desire in me to create change. Through research, I found that Girl Scouts formerly had a program called Wing Scouts which evolved into the Senior Wing Scout Fliers. These girls were actually allowed to earn their pilot license! Though the program was phased out in the 1960s, there is no reason why a modernized version could not be revived with the current emphasis on S.T.E.M. I went to my Girl Scout Council and then current CEO Susan Stewart. I wrote a letter to the National CEO Anna Chavez explaining that if “Girls Can Do Anything” they should be able to take a flight like Boy Scouts. Now, seven years later, those safety checkpoints prohibiting Girl Scouts from flying in a small aircraft and actually handling the controls are still prohibited. I have grown up with the Girl Scout motto of “Creating Girls of Courage, Confidence and Character” as well as the G.I.R.L. slogan. Girl Scouts are Go-Getters, Innovators, Risk-Takers and Leaders - but are still prohibited from troop activities where they can get real-world exposure to aviation. Less than 9% of the world’s pilots are women. It is time for Girl Scouts to help change that number.

I have been involved in my local Experimental Aircraft Association since that first flight. For the past five years, I have served as the Volunteer Team Lead, Flight Leader and mentor for the Chapter 66 Young Eagle Rallies. Over the years, we have introduced numerous Boy Scout troops to their first flight in a small aircraft. The number of girls we have flown is substantially lower. While we have flown several Girl Scouts on their own, a troop experience would benefit girls

who need encouragement from their sister scouts to try new experiences. As a movement, Girl Scouts has put an emphasis on S.T.E.M. Aviation should be one of those fields.

My Gold Award project, *Girls Who Soar* started as an interactive workshop hosted in three areas across my local community for girls interested in aviation. Topics included basic flight instruction, flight planning, pilot requirements and scholarship information. The girls also constructed a miniature wing rib and made a fun aviation keychain. All workshops also included recreational and/or career women pilots who shared their personal aviation journeys with the girls. Subsequently, in conjunction with my local Ninety-Nines chapter, we hosted a flight day where the girls experienced flight in a small aircraft and even took the controls. I am currently working on the next phase of my project which includes creating a website for educational videos and resources for girls to learn more about aviation.

Girl Scouts is a more accessible and well known program than the EAA, and subsequently provides more opportunities for young women. Girl Scout's career initiative badges have made exploring careers fun and interactive for girls, specializing in typically male-dominated fields such as Cybersecurity and Robotics. The enclosed proposal details why I believe that GSUSA should institute an Aviation Career Badge. Aviation has always been a male dominated industry. The pandemic created the current pilot shortage and an organization dedicated to empowering young women should be encouraging stronger representation for women in this field. The proposal also explains why I believe the restrictions on Girl Scouts flying in affiliation with GSUSA should be lifted, specifically for the benefit of young women's careers. I want young women to be able to access the resources and knowledge that I did at such a young age.

In support of the following proposal, I created a petition. The link is below, and to date has the support from 200 members of my aviation community and Girl Scout Council, the Girl Scouts of Gulf Coast Florida. I plan to continue advocating for more support to lift the restrictions.

<https://chnng.it/YqNxFSYd>

I look forward to hearing from GSUSA, and I hope my experience has inspired the board of directors. I appreciate your consideration.

Autumn Pepper Rhodes
Girls in Aviation Advocate
13 year Girl Scout Ambassador
Girl Scouts of Gulf Coast Florida

MEMORANDUM FOR: GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA, NATIONAL BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

FROM: AUTUMN PEPPER RHODES, GIRL SCOUT AMBASSADOR

SUBJECT: AVIATION BADGE AND REGULATION REFORM

1. OBJECTIVE

To reform the Girl Scouts of the USA policy regarding the use of privately owned aircraft for educational and career exploration purposes. The Girl Scouts works to show girls that they are capable of hard things and advocate for S.T.E.M. exploration. A male dominated and unique field, like aviation, is the perfect example of the careers that the Girl Scouts of the USA should be encouraging their scouts to pursue. The goal of this memorandum is to strongly encourage the modification of the existing regulations and develop a waiver that allows Girl Scouts to be able to participate and engage in aviation oriented events in privately owned aircraft, as well as establish an Aviation Exploration badge in the S.T.E.M. badge category for Cadets, Seniors, and Ambassadors.

2. PROBLEM

Troop Leaders and assistant leaders of Girl Scout troops are granted the ability to drive members and girls with the objective of transportation to/from an event. The driver has to meet very few criteria in order to transport girls. The Girl Scout Activity Standards and Guidelines states that, "Each driver of motorized private transportation must be at least 21 years old and

hold a valid operator's license appropriate to the vehicle." These are all the requirements that a driver must meet in order to transport young women for an event, even in their own private vehicle. On the contrary, there is a strict safety concern regarding aviation in private aircraft. The act of flying in a privately owned aircraft is "prohibited" according to the Standard Safety Guidelines. The use of private aircraft for transportation OR academic purposes is not permitted, although the guidelines needing to be met for use of private automobiles, that are arguably more dangerous, are kept to two.

3. DISCUSSION

The prohibition of Girl Scouts to partake in aviation activities in private aircraft is contradictory and restrictive. The use of aircraft for demonstrational and education purposes is a great way to get girls excited and interested in aviation and aircraft. Less than 10 percent (9.02%) of pilots are women, and the number of women working in the aviation industry is nearly as low. The Girl Scouts is a program that encourages science, technology, and engineering education and the prohibition of supervised and appropriate use of aircraft is hindering these numbers from rising.

Furthermore, the Scouts BSA permits and encourages the pursuit of aviation. To earn the "Aviation Merit Badge," the boy scout may take a flight in a small aircraft, with the permission of their parent or guardian. The closest badge the Girl Scouts has to this is a Space Science Badge. Currently, there are three Coding badges, three Cybersecurity badges, and three Robotics badges that go all of the way through from Daisy to Ambassador. Creating at least one badge that pertains to aviation would be a great way to introduce girls to a different and more niche career

path that is in desperate need of employees. GSUSA encourages young women to pursue careers typically dominated by men, and aviation should be no different.

4. ACTION RECOMMENDED

- a. Implement the use of a waiver for guardians of a Girl Scout over the age of 13 to sign, allowing the girls to participate and fly in the private aircraft for academic and education purposes.
 - i. The flight must be within 25 miles of the home airport with no stops along the route.
 - ii. The pilot must be over 21 years of age, have a private pilot certificate, and must be current to carry passengers and have a current medical under FARAIM 61.
 - iii. The pilot must have at least 500 logged flight hours.
- b. Conduct background checks on the volunteer pilots that choose to work with the Girl Scouts or through collaborative programs.
- c. Establishment of an Aviation Exploration badge for Cadets, Seniors, and Ambassadors that includes hands-on activities for girls to learn about aviation and has an option to take a flight in a small aircraft for one of the badge requirements.

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Autumn Pepper Rhodes
Girls in Aviation Advocate
13 year Girl Scout Ambassador
Girl Scouts of Gulf Coast Florida