



Pull up your pants or else, Virginia lawmakers warn

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WASHINGTON, Feb 9 (AFP) -

Failing to pull up your pants in Virginia could cost you 50 dollars if the southern US state's legislators have their way.

The House chamber in Virginia's General Assembly voted 60-34 Tuesday in favor of the so-called "droopy drawers" bill to penalize men and women who wear their pants too low, exposing boxer shorts or sexy thong strings in a "lewd or indecent manner."

"Underwear is called underwear for a reason," said Republican lawmaker John Reid. "Most of us would identify this as the coarsening of society."

Democrat lawmaker Algie T. Howell, who first introduced the bill to the assembly, characterized it as a move "to do something good not only for the state of Virginia but for this entire country."

"It is not an attack on baggy pants," Howell said.

Critics, including civil rights activists and the apparel industry, denounced the bill as an attack on constitutional rights. They said it targets young blacks who imitate rap stars wearing loose pants, and warned that the proposed law could lead to racial discrimination.

"African-Americans are going to be the ones who are harassed by the police under this law," said Kent Willis of the Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.



PRESS COVERAGE

The fashion is not limited to blacks or to the US, having been popularized around the globe by white actresses and singers like Britney Spears also wearing their pants vertiginously low.

Clothes sellers also reacted sharply to the legislation. Freshpair.com, a leading online retailer, said it will give anyone fined for showing their undergarments 100 dollars worth of underwear.

The company called the bill "an affront to the constitutional right to express oneself freely."

"Recently, people have exercised this freedom; from the bra burners of the 1960s to flag-wearing rock stars of the 1980s and 1990s," Freshpair.com said in a statement.

The legislation will now move to the conservative state's Senate for consideration.

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