

200 belts as saggy pants ban begins

'Pull Your Pants Up' law greets students returning to school

[ORLANDO, Fla](#) — A Florida lawmaker is welcoming students back to school by handing out 200 leather belts to help them comply with a new state law that bans saggy pants on campuses.

Democratic State Senator Gary Siplin of Orlando pushed for six years for the so-called Pull Your Pants Up law, and finally got his wish last spring.

The state legislature voted overwhelmingly to enact the ban at the start of the 2011-12 school year, making Florida and Arkansas the only two states with such a widespread prohibition against saggy pants for students.

"We want our kids to believe they're going to college, and part of that is an attitude, and part of that is being dressed professionally," Siplin told Reuters.

The statewide school dress code bucks a fashion trend with roots in prison attire and the rap and hip-hop music community. Siplin, who admits to sporting an Afro and platform shoes in his youth, grew tired of seeing young men wearing their pants so low their underwear was exposed.

He originally sought to criminalize saggy pants, but the current law instead subjects repeat violators to up to three days of in-school suspension and up to 30 days suspension from extracurricular activities. It also targets low-cut and midriff-exposing shirts on girls.

Siplin fought off objections from the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which contend the law violates personal freedom and unfairly targets minority students.

But Siplin, who is black, said he had received accolades from constituents for his efforts.

"The parents, the grandmothers, the professional people, they say, 'How can they walk down the street showing their behinds?' It's not civilized," he said.

Source:

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44333476/ns/us_news-life/t/florida-politician-hands-out-belts-saggy-pants-ban-begins/

Early Monday, Siplin handed out a dozen belts donated by a local church to students who showed up with droopy drawers at Oak Ridge High School in Orlando. He left another 25 belts with school administrators to hand out as needed.

Siplin said he also gave away about 100 belts at two other largely minority high schools as students arrived last week for their first week of school.

"I'm not going to hire anyone, white or black, with saggy pants," he said. "I want to make sure our kids qualify."

Similar laws across the country

Municipalities around the country have enacted their own laws barring saggy pants, and many individual school dress codes already ban fashions that leave certain body parts exposed.

Principal Valeria Maxwell had previously implemented a strict dress code forbidding saggy pants at Jones High School, located in one of Orlando's traditionally African-American neighborhoods.

She supports the broader ban and said students were complying, with only about 10 out of 1,000 students at Jones violating the rule during the first seven days of school.

Reactions to the law among students were mixed on Tuesday.

Antoinette Sims, a 17-year-old senior at Jones, said she and many of her girlfriends found saggy pants unattractive.

"You can see your boxers sticking out. It's not cute," Sims said.

Joshua Simpkins, a 16-year-old sophomore, said the government should stay out of students' fashion choices.

"We bought our clothes (the) way we wanted them," he said. "It doesn't matter how you dress. You come to school to learn."

But his friend, 15-year-old sophomore Carlos Hall, said he supported the ban.

"It helps the community out to stop everybody looking druggish for the little ones coming up," Hall said.

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