



ARTS & CULTURE

US Senate Permits More Clothing Choices

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The U.S. Senate's majority leader said this week that the legislative body will no longer enforce a dress code on its floor. A dress code is a set of rules about what may and may not be worn.

Senator Chuck Schumer, the majority leader, said in a statement, "Senators are able to choose what they wear on the Senate floor. I will continue to wear a **suit**."

The change comes after Senator John Fetterman, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, has been voting from the doorways of the Senate to avoid violating the dress code. While other senators wear business clothes or dresses in the Capitol building, Fetterman usually wears informal clothes like shorts at work.

Schumer did not talk about Fetterman in his statement about the dress code. But the loosening of the dress code will only apply to senators, not other employees.

During his campaign for the U.S. Senate, Fetterman suffered a stroke, a serious medical condition that happens when the brain does not get enough oxygen from the blood. Earlier this year, Fetterman checked himself into a hospital for treatment on depression.

When Fetterman returned from treatment, he started wearing more informal clothes, which he says make him more **comfortable**.

The changes in dress code were met with disapproval from some of the Senate's more **formal** members.

Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall, a Republican, said it is a "sad day in the Senate" and that the people who Fetterman and Schumer represent should be **embarrassed**.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine agreed, arguing that the new rules discredit what the Senate represents. “I plan to wear a bikini tomorrow to the Senate floor,” Collins joked. A bikini is what one wears when swimming.

Fetterman said he was not sure if he would start making use of the new rules just yet. He said it is nice to have them as a choice, but he plans to not use them very often and not overuse them.

Fetterman said of his critics, “They’re **freaking** out, I don’t understand it.” He said there are more important things they should be working on instead of what he wears.

Not all Republicans were troubled by the change. Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley was wearing **jeans** on Monday evening. He says he normally wears informal clothes when he flies in from his home state for the first votes of the week.

“Now I can vote from the Senate floor on Mondays,” Hawley said, noting that he usually wears a suit and tie every other day. A tie is a piece of formal clothing.

Nearby, Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy was also without a tie. The Democrat said he has gotten in trouble with the Senate’s official clothes police, called Sergeant-at-Arms, in the past for not wearing a tie on the floor.

“They would tell us when we were doing it wrong,” Murphy said.

It is unclear if the rules for more formal wear were actually written down anywhere. But Schumer’s statement means employees will no longer criticize senators for their choice of clothing or ask them to vote from the doorway.

“I think we should all want to be more comfortable,” Fetterman told a group of reporters on Monday. He added that now that they have that choice, and if people want to wear a suit, “... then that’s great.”

I’m Gregory Stachel.

Mary Clare Jalonick reported this story for The Associated Press. Gregory Stachel adapted the story for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

suit – *n.* a set of clothes that usually consists of a jacket and a skirt or pair of pants that are made out of the same material

comfortable – *adj.* permitting you to be relaxed

formal – *adj.* requiring or using serious and proper clothes and manners

embarrassed – *v.* to make (someone) feel confused and foolish in front of other people

freak – *v.* to become very upset

jeans – *n.* pants made of a strong cloth (called denim)
