

**From:** [Jenny Eck](#)  
**To:** [Fox, Susan](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: dress code  
**Date:** Monday, December 8, 2014 8:20:13 PM

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Hi Susan,

I wanted to make you aware of the concerns that I have sent to our Speaker of the House that the dress code, as currently written, would create an atmosphere of discrimination for women in the House.

Thanks so much,

Jenny

Rep. Jenny Eck  
HD 79

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Jenny Eck <[jennyeck4mt@gmail.com](mailto:jennyeck4mt@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** dress code  
**Date:** December 8, 2014 at 4:25:28 PM MST  
**To:** [Rep.Austin.Knudsen@mt.gov](mailto:Rep.Austin.Knudsen@mt.gov)

Dear Austin,

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me on Saturday about my concerns with the recent dress code memo. I have given it a lot of thought and have discussed it with other members of our leadership team. As we discussed on the phone, it is problematic to me that this document admonishes women to be "sensitive to skirt lengths and necklines". I think you can trust me and other female members of the Legislature to know how to dress appropriately. Also, the fact that women are specifically told that flip flops, open-toe sandals, and tennis shoes are not appropriate is baffling to me. Don't men wear these kinds of footwear too? As for leggings, I've never seen a woman wear leggings instead of pants at the Legislature. The end result of this dress code is that it puts women under an extra level of scrutiny because of our gender. That's the largest problem I have with it. I don't think any woman or girl who works in the House or visits the House this Session should feel that she has to be subjected to extra scrutiny of her physical appearance based on her gender. To keep such a code in place would create an atmosphere of discrimination where women are being evaluated for what we wear rather than our ideas and our contributions as elected Legislators.

The document also raises concerns about classism and freedom of the press ... not to mention questions about how such a code would even be enforced. But in general, as long as there is a point-by-point dress code spelling out what is appropriate and what is not, I think it is going to be condescending to House members and visitors. As David Parker (political science professor at MSU)

pointed out in a tweet yesterday, even the US Congress has a very vague dress code: “generally business attire is required and no hats”.

My proposal, then, is that a very simple statement is issued to our House members (and that the previous memo is redacted). It would read as follows: *“We ask that members of the House dress in professional, business attire as is befitting the honor of the positions that we hold in office. There are no casual Fridays or Saturdays.”* I think we can trust members to know what that means.

Thanks in advance for your consideration,

Rep. Jenny Eck