

by Sofia Rivera '24

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS WITH SOPA

NEW SCHOOL YEAR, NEW DRESS CODE, NEW ELEVATE COLUMN. TODAY ON KNOW YOUR RIGHTS WITH SOPA, I WILL BE INFORMING YOU ON DRESS CODES. ARE THEY CONSTITUTIONAL? IS OUR FREEDOM TO EXPRESS OURSELVES PROTECTED?

On this column I will take popular topics and explain if they're constitutional as well as inform you on your American rights. Each issue I will look at something that is being talked about around the hallways. There has been talk on how the school legally can't demand for students to wear skirts near the knee, or give demerits for wearing slides, but actually, they can.

Institutions, both public and private, enact dress codes to create a certain image, to have fewer distractions, or to comply with public safety and health standards. And that is well within any school's rights to do so. The Regis Jesuit High School website states that their dress code "seeks to maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to the highest quality of learning and animates the mission of our school." Why can they do this?

WHAT DOES THE FIRST AMENDMENT SAY?

"CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS, OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES."

Under The First Amendment, five of your freedoms are protected: speech, religion, press, assembly, and the right to petition the government. Although the Supreme Court has never directly addressed school dress codes, a student's right to express themselves by what they wear has been protected under their First Amendment right to free speech before, and maintains under it today.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SCHOOLS?

A public school can require that skirts must be a certain length, but cannot push a certain gender towards a specific choice of clothing, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. Private schools are not under the direct control of the government. This means the First Amendment does not provide protection for students at private schools. So Regis Jesuit High School holds the right to implement any dress code based on its values, and those who choose to attend must abide by it.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS?

Outside of a school setting, any establishment public or private has the right to enact dress codes

if they are written clearly and do not discriminate against sex, religion, or goes against Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1965, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone based on race, color, national origin, sex, or religion.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED?

If anyone is under an institution that fails to address their rights to freedom, they have the right to a fair trial against such an organization. They could also petition against the federal court under 42 U.S. Code 1983 (Civil action for deprivation of rights). Remember, under The First Amendment, the government can supervise your conduct, but not your content.

Do you think our dress code is fair?

Should the courts focus on this topic more seriously?

Have a topic you want to look into? Reach out.

Make sure to look at the next print of Elevate so you KNOW YOUR RIGHTS WITH SOPA!

ELEVATE STAFF STAFF EDITORIAL

In this time of major global conflict, we find the need for introducing student media and journalism is now at its most crucial point. Students in middle school, high school, and college will be the leaders and journalists of tomorrow, reporting on stories that really matter in our lives. They will report stories of our greatest moments, and our lowest points. The skills they practice today only help their storytelling and ability to capture a moment that will change the way we live. Journalism is a necessity for moving forward. We encourage all students to at some point in their lives join a journalism class or club. You will learn skills about asking the important questions, ones that give a glimpse of what you can not see on the surface.

With the ongoing war in Ukraine and threats to those who expose the truth of what is really going on, journalists continue to show the reality. They bravely travel to the scene, interview those who are impacted the most, and share what they found with the world. They put their lives on the line to seek the truth and to illuminate the unknowns in our lives.

It takes an enormous amount of practice and skill to master the art of the interview and translate that into content seen by an outsider. To be able to capture the emotions happening in the moment through photography, video, audio, and written words, is a process we sometimes take for granted.

We are fortunate to live in a country where the truth is delivered to us. We aren't censored or lied to by our government. Under the first amendment, we have a free press that gives us the truth. We no longer have to wait for the news, stories are now at our fingertips. People can speak the truth against those in power. We can speak the truth without repercussions. The truth matters, the truth has power.

Our staff stands in complete and united solidarity with the communities struggling to live in the conditions this war has created. We pray that the violence ends, and everyone around the world will see the reality of the destruction taking place. We pray for the journalists of today and tomorrow who dedicate themselves to sharing the truth. Thank you for what you do.