

A hip-hop fashion statement linked to jails may land some people in court. "If nothing else, it's a great part of a conversation we need to have," said Atlanta City Councilwoman Joyce Sheperd. Trenton Councilwoman Annette Lartigue is drafting a law to outlaw baggy pants. Proposals to ban loose-fitting pants are popping up nationwide. Martin is an Atlanta councilman who supports banning the loose-fitting pants. Regardless of the outcome, some see an overdue debate about how to draw the line in public dress in schools, community centers, and churches. Some cities have adopted laws that forbid the wearing of pants baggy enough to expose the wearer's undergarments. The baggy-pants trend emerged from prisons. At one Trenton hip-hop clothing store, shopper Mark Wise, 30, said that he wears the baggy jeans for practical reasons, saying, "The reason I don't wear tight pants is because it's easier to get money out of my pocket this way. . . . It's just more comfortable." They believe the laws target African-American males based on their attire and might not withstand a court challenge. In some communities, offenders can face fines and even jail time. In Delcambre, Louisiana, wearing the pants can lead to six months in jail and fines up to \$500. Similar laws are being considered in Atlanta, Georgia, and in Trenton, New Jersey. By the late 1980s, the trend had made it to hip-hop videos and high school hallways.