

# The United States Team uniforms for the opening ceremony is rather hideous, and illegal, and a bit anachronistic

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By the time you read this, the opening ceremony for a large sporting event organized by a lawsuit-happy organization may already have taken place. As part of the ceremony, the team representing the United States entered wearing ugly uniforms. They're so ugly that even the hideous Christmas sweater in your closet, the one with the reindeer and wreaths and candy canes, actually steps out, points, and laughs, saying "Ha ha, what an ugly sweater!" If you study the picture carefully, you will observe a number of things. First of all, the incorporation of the flag into the sweater pattern (and once in the pants) violates Title 4, Section 8, paragraphs(d) and (j) of the United States Code.<sup>1</sup>

(d) The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. ...

(j) No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations. ...

Of course, this section of the United States Code is violated constantly because it specifies no penalty for violation. Therefore, you can break this law all you want; even if caught, there is no punishment. (Exception: Penalties are specified for violations within the District of Columbia. So the Olympic Team had better not wear those sweaters when they meet with the President. Actually, that's probably good advice anyway from a fashion standpoint, completely ignoring the legal angle.) But more interesting is that if you look closely at the picture, you might notice that the giant flag in the background has 48 stars on it, which means that this photo was taken some time between 1912 and 1959. I guess they've been working on this uniform for a long time. Either that, or they decided to kick Alaska and Hawaii off the team. (Actually, if you're kicking states off the flag for not being part of the team, then the flag should have only 39 stars because there is nobody from Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, or West Virginia.)

<sup>1</sup> There is disagreement over whether a flag pattern counts as a flag. Since there is no enforcement, it doesn't really matter, so work with me here. I'm going somewhere with this.

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