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VII.14 Sumptuary laws of the Romans

- The Spirit of Law - Book VII. Consequences of the different principles of the three governments with respect to sumptuary laws, to luxury, and to the condition of women -

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We have spoken of public dissoluteness because it is tied to luxury, which always follows it, and which it always follows. If you leave the movements of the heart unbridled, how can you rein in failings of the mind ?

In Rome, in addition to the general institutions, the censors had the magistrates make several specific laws to keep women frugal. Such was the purpose of the Fannian, Licinian, and Oppian Laws. We can see in Livy [\[1\]](#) how agitated the senate was when it called for revocation of the Oppian Law. Valerius Maximus fixes the era of Roman luxury at the abrogation of that law.

[\[1\]](#) Decade IV, book IV.