



Prison-based Gerrymandering in Connecticut

The Supreme Court requires state and local governments to update their legislative districts once per decade so that each district contains the same population, giving each resident equal representation. The U.S. Census Bureau counts incarcerated people where they are confined, not at their legal residence. Using these counts to draw legislative districts violates Connecticut state law and makes democracy suffer.

The problem

- Without using prisoners as padding, 7 state house districts would not meet federal minimum population requirements and would need to be redrawn.
 - ◆ For example, each House district in Connecticut should have 22,553 residents. District 59, claims the populations of multiple prisons, and has only 19,200 actual residents. Every group of 85 residents in this district are given just as much influence as 100 residents of districts without prisons.
- Legislative clout is malapportioned because urban areas are home for a disproportionate share of the state's incarcerated people, and most of the state's prison cells are located in communities that do not send very many people to prison.
 - ◆ Less than 20% of the state lives in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New Britain, Stamford or Waterbury, but more than half of the state's prisoners come from those 6 cities.
 - ◆ The 5 towns that contain the majority (60%) of the state's prison cells — Cheshire, East Lyme, Enfield, Somers and Suffield — are home to less than 1% of the state's prisoners.

Connecticut law says a prison cell is not a residence:

"No person shall be deemed to have lost his residence in any town by reason of his absence therefrom in any institution maintained by the state."

(General Statutes of Connecticut § 9-14.)

Enfield implemented its own solution

- The city of Enfield already rejects the Census Bureau's data when it redistricts. If the city had based its districts on Census Bureau population counts, 30% of the third district's population would have been incarcerated, giving every group of 70 residents near the prison as much influence as 100 residents elsewhere in the city.

Solutions for Connecticut

- Connecticut should pass legislation to follow the lead of Delaware, Maryland and New York and end prison-based gerrymandering. All three states passed legislation requiring the state to collect home address data for people in prison. The home address data will be used to adjust Census data for redistricting purposes so that districts will be based on everyone's actual place of residence.