



For more information about Prison-Based Gerrymandering, see our website and weekly newsletter at <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org>

Prison-based Gerrymandering in Rock Island County, IL

The Supreme Court requires counties to update their legislative districts once per decade so that each district contains the same population, giving each resident equal representation in county government. The US Census Bureau counts people where they are incarcerated, not where they are from, and when the Census figures do not reflect the county's population, democracy suffers.

The problem

- The Census Bureau counts incarcerated people as residents of the prison, but Illinois law explicitly states that: "a person confined in prison under the judgment and sentence of a court does not thereby change his residence." *County of Franklin v. County of Henry*, 26 Ill.App. 193 (Ill.App. 2 Dist. 1887).
- Rock Island County has twenty-five districts of about 6,000 people each, but when drawing district lines, the county included 1,105 people incarcerated at the East Moline Correctional Center in its population counts.
- The 1,105 people of the East Moline Correctional Center were attributed to District 24, where the Census data placed them. Rock Island's 24th District derives 18% of its population from the prison. This means that 82 residents in this district have the same voting power as 100 residents in the other districts.
- The Census, however, counted East Moline Correctional Center in the village of Oak Grove in District 24, but the prison is actually located across the county in the city of East Moline, in District 4. This means that if Rock Island doesn't exclude prison populations the next time it redistricts, the prison-based gerrymandering problem will be centered around the city of East Moline.

Example Counties with Solutions

Fayette County:

Excluded prisoners prior to drawing its 7 legislative districts; otherwise the district which includes Vandalia Correctional Center would have been more than 46% prisoners.

Montgomery County:

Redistricting based on uncorrected Census data would have resulted making the Graham Correctional Center half of either district 3 or 4 giving those residents twice the influence of anyone else in the county.

What other counties do

- Ten Illinois counties with large prisons exclude the prison population when apportioning local government.
- The Illinois courts have given counties the discretion to choose the population base used for redistricting. The decision to exclude the prison populations during redistricting therefore belongs to each county.

Solutions for Rock Island County

- Rock Island County should exclude the prison population when it updates its legislative districts after the 2010 Census.
- Residents of Rock Island County should support the passage of bill HB94, pending in the Illinois House, to require the state to distribute adjusted counts for county use in future redistricting.