



For more information about prison-based gerrymandering, see our website and weekly newsletter at <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org>

Prison-Based Gerrymandering in Oklahoma Counties

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

The problem

- The Census Bureau counts incarcerated people as residents of the prison, but people in prison can't vote and are not residents of the surrounding community.
- In 16 Oklahoma counties, a sizable portion of one county commission district consists of prisoners, not local residents. In those districts, a smaller number of county residents is given just as much influence over county affairs as the larger districts that do not contain prisons.
- In Alfalfa County, one county commission district is 46% prisoners, giving every group of 54 people in the district with the prison as much influence as 100 people in the other districts. Other notable counties:

County	Commission district	Total district population	Prison population	Vote enhancement
Alfalfa	3	2,116	981	46%
Atoka	1	4,407	1,409	32%
Beckham	1	6,720	1,534	23%
Blaine	3	4,046	1,329	33%
Caddo	1	10,192	762	7%
Canadian	3	28,972	1,671	6%
Comanche	1	39,428	2,136	5%
Craig	2	5,044	410	8%
Hughes	1	4,780	968	20%
Jefferson	3	2,273	191	8%
Muskogee	3	23,713	1,549	7%
Okfuskee	1	4,085	675	17%
Osage	1	14,494	1,310	9%
Pittsburg	2	14,929	2,082	14%
Woods	1	3,082	431	14%
Woodward	3	6,286	514	8%

Michigan Counties' Solution

In Michigan, nearly all counties avoided distorting democracy by ignoring the prison populations when drawing their districts, even when the distortion would be quite small.

In Lapeer County, for example, using the census would have meant a district with 6% prisoners.

The county clerk told us that they excluded prisoners because the prisoners were "not really residents."

What Greer County, OK does

- Greer County ignored the State Reformatory when drawing its districts, otherwise one district would be 42% prisoners, giving the residents of that district disproportionate influence over the county.

What local governments in other states do

- Mississippi and Colorado require counties with prisons to remove the prison population prior to redistricting, and Virginia law encourages it. About 100 counties around the country ignore the prison populations when drawing county districts.

Solutions for Oklahoma Counties

- Oklahoma counties should follow the lead of Greer County and counties around the country and exclude the prison population when they next update their commission districts after this census.