



Ending prison-based gerrymandering would aid the American Indian vote in Oregon

The Census Bureau counts incarcerated people as residents of their prison addresses, rather than at their legal home residences. This little-known policy has a big impact on how our elections work. When Census prison counts are used for redistricting, communities with large prisons get extra representation, and the voting rights of everyone else are diluted. The practice especially reduces the voting strength of American Indian communities because of racially disparate rates of incarceration.

American Indians are disproportionately incarcerated in Oregon

- American Indians in Oregon are incarcerated at more than three times the rate of whites in the state. American Indians make up 1.3% of the total population of Oregon, but they are 3.6% of the incarcerated population.

Counting incarcerated individuals outside of their home districts dilutes the power of their home communities

- Counting incarcerated people in the district where they are imprisoned rather than in their home communities means that their voices and the voices of their communities can more easily be ignored.

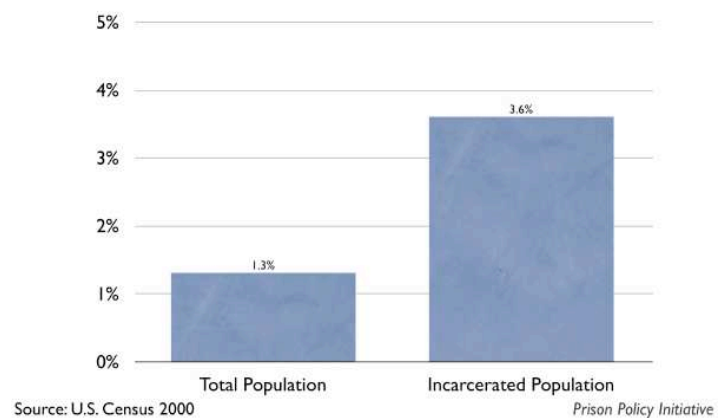
The solution

The constitutional principle of “One Person One Vote” requires that political power be equally distributed on the basis of population, without special treatment for particular regions or industries.

Oregon should follow the lead of Delaware, Maryland, and New York and pass legislation to count incarcerated people at their pre-incarceration addresses for redistricting purposes.

Prison-based gerrymandering hurts everyone who doesn't live next to a large prison, but the communities that experience disproportionate incarceration pay the highest price of all. Basing legislative districts on actual population would give all communities the same voice in government regardless of whether or not they contain a large prison.

Native Americans are overrepresented in Oregon's prisons and jails



The Oregon Constitution says that a prison cell is not a residence

“For the purpose of voting, no person shall be deemed to have gained, or lost a residence ... while confined in any public prison.”

Ore. Const. Art IV § 4.