



Ending prison-based gerrymandering would aid the African-American and Latino vote in Connecticut

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 Black and Latino communities because of both racially disparate rates of incarceration, and the state's tendency to build prisons in disproportionately white areas.

The facts

Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately incarcerated in Connecticut:

- Blacks and Latinos are only 19% of Connecticut's population, but are 72% of the state's prisoners. (African-Americans are almost 13 times as likely to be incarcerated as whites, and Latinos are incarcerated 7.5 times as often as whites.)

When Connecticut uses Census Bureau prison counts to pad the legislative districts that contain prisons, it gives extra influence to communities that have large prisons and dilutes the votes of all other residents in the state:

- The majority-white residents of 6 State House districts get significantly more representation in the legislature because each of their districts includes more than 1,000 incarcerated African-Americans and Latinos from other parts of the state.
- For example, State House District 59, (Enfield) claims more than 3,000 African Americans and Latinos as constituents. But 90% of the African Americans and 74% of Latinos are not actually legal residents of the district, but rather are temporarily incarcerated in the Enfield, Willard and Robinson Correctional Institutions.
- The dilution of African-Americans and Latinos political power is not limited to the 59th district: 75% of the state's prison cells are located in disproportionately white house districts.

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.)

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.

Connecticut should follow the lead of Delaware, Maryland and New York and pass legislation to count incarcerated people at their home 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.

For more information see the [Prison Policy Initiative Connecticut Campaign Against Prison-Based Gerrymandering](http://prisonersofthecensus.org/connecticut.html) page at <http://prisonersofthecensus.org/connecticut.html> or contact Common Cause in Connecticut, 55 Oak Street, Hartford, CT 06106, 860.549.1220, CQuickmire@CommonCause.org