



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

Prison-Based Gerrymandering in Florida 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. The practice of including prisons in local districting plans leads to serious distortions of political power in county governments. For example:

- In **Baker County**, 25% of the people in District 1 are incarcerated in a correctional facility, and are not residents of the county. As a result, each group of 75 actual residents of District 1 is given as much political clout as 100 people elsewhere in the county.
- In **Calhoun County**, 48% of the people in District 4 are incarcerated at the Calhoun Correctional Institution. As a result, the actual residents of District 4 are given almost twice as much political clout as people elsewhere in the county.
- In **Hardee County**, 20% of the people in District 2 are incarcerated in a correctional facility, and are not residents of the county. As a result, each group of 80 actual residents of District 2 is given as much political clout as 100 people elsewhere in the county.
- In **Jefferson County**, 29% of the people in District 3 are incarcerated in a correctional facility, and are not residents of the county. As a result, each group of 71 residents of District 3 is given as much political clout as 100 people elsewhere in the county.
- In **Wakulla County**, 18% of the people in District 1 are incarcerated in a correctional facility, and are not residents of the county. As a result, each group of 82 actual residents of District 1 is given as much political clout as 100 people elsewhere in the county.

Some Florida counties and a hundred counties elsewhere have solution

Ideally, the Census Bureau would not include prison populations in county population counts. But counties can fix the problem themselves by removing the prison populations prior to redistricting. At least 5 Florida counties and more than 100 counties around the country ignored prison populations when drawing county districts after the last Census. In Florida, the counties of Columbia, Gulf, Hamilton, Holmes and Madison all ignored the prison populations when drawing their county commissioner districts.

In 2001, Gulf County requested the advice of the Florida Attorney General. They asked whether they had to include the prison population in redistricting; the Attorney General replied that, in his legal opinion, they did. Gulf County, however, was not willing to create a district where the prison would make up 80% of the population. In such a district, each voter would have 5 times the influence of voters in other county districts. By ignoring the Attorney General's advice, Gulf County stood up for common sense, and the constitutional principle of "one person, one vote."

See our Florida 2010 Census Guide at <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/50states/FL.html> for more data, resources, and updates.