



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

Wisconsin's Census Adjustment Amendment

The problem

The Census Bureau counts incarcerated people as residents of the communities where prisons are based, as opposed to their home addresses. Even though Wisconsin law states that incarceration does not change a person's residence, Wisconsin uses the Census' figures, including the miscount of incarcerated people, for redistricting purposes. Most of the state's prisoners are urban in origin, but the vast majority are counted as residents of remote prison locations. Counting incarcerated people as if they were residents of prison towns distorts democracy at both the state and local levels.

The solution

Representative Kessler and Senator Taylor have introduced a state constitutional amendment (Assembly Joint Resolution 63 / Senate Joint Resolution 42) that will address this critical issue. Ideally, the Census Bureau would count incarcerated people at home or the state would have enough time to develop a solution that would count incarcerated people at their home addresses. But as insufficient time remains for those strategies, the proposed amendment would require the state, the counties and other local governments to remove the state prison population from the data used for redistricting. This would prohibit districts with prisons from exerting undue influence over all other districts, and would eliminate the majority of the prison-based gerrymandering problem.

Who does the amendment benefit?

- Residents in state districts without prisons, including urban districts, will benefit in the state legislature because the people who live in prison districts will no longer have enhanced representation.
- Residents who have a prison in their county but not their town will benefit because the adjacent districts with prisons will no longer have enhanced representation in county government.
- County legislators in counties with prisons will benefit, because the bill will remove the controversy about whether counties should adjust the Census on their own; and the state will assume the difficult technical task of making the adjustments to the data.