

To Whom it May Concern:

I was shocked and horrified to learn that states have counted incarcerated individuals as residents in their current locations when drawing district lines for state and congressional representation.

This practice violates common sense, basic fairness, and Pennsylvania state law. PA law states that jail inmates are required to vote in their home districts - not in districts in which they are currently being held.

PA law also states that incarcerated individuals "shall be deemed to reside at the last known address before confinement." (Pennsylvania Election Code (25 Pa.C.S. §1302(3)))

Counting inmates in districts where they are incarcerated gives disproportionate political power to rural, under-populated, areas, where prisons are located, at the expense of urban, densely populated areas, where the majority of prisoners formerly resided.

The concept of equal protection of the laws is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution in the 14th amendment. The concept of "one person one vote" has been consistently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. The practice of prison gerrymandering is anathema to the equitable exercise of the franchise - a citizen's most basic right.

The Census Bureau has the opportunity to right this wrong in 2020. In the name of the American values of justice and equality, I urge the Bureau to end prison gerrymandering.

Thank you,
-Ellen Pierson