

To Karen Humes:

The Census Bureau must change the way it counts incarcerated people. People do not live in prisons; they bide their time there – often miles or hundreds of miles from where they actually live, where their family unit is, and all of the other associated information that the Census and the American Community Survey collects. Counting prisoners as individuals living in prisons distorts the Census’ picture of the American population and the political districting that relies on Census data. It perversely perpetuates incentives to build more prisons, especially in rural areas far from the prisoners actual communities, which increases the isolation and dysfunction of the criminal justice system. The Census should count people where they live, not where they are detained.

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