



Dear Karen Humes,

Common Cause Illinois submits this comment in response to the Census Bureau's federal register notice regarding the Residence Rule and Residence Situations, 80 FR 28950 (May 20, 2015). Common Cause Illinois urges you to count incarcerated people at their home address, rather than at the particular facility that they happen to be located at on Census day.

Common Cause Illinois is committed to ensuring that all individuals are given equal representation. If changes are not made to the existing process, incarcerated people will continue to incorrectly skew the results of the census, enhancing the political clout of people who live near prisons while diluting the overall voting power of all other Illinoisans.

As you know, American demographics and living situations have changed drastically in the 225 years since the first Census, and the Census has evolved in response to many of these changes in order to continue to provide an accurate picture of the nation. Today, the growth in the prison population requires the Census to update its methodology again.

The need for change in the "usual residence" rule, as it relates to incarcerated persons, has been growing over the last few decades. As recently as the 1980s, the incarcerated population in the U.S. totaled less than half a million. But since then, the number of incarcerated people has more than quadrupled, to over two million people behind bars. The manner in which this population is counted now has huge implications for the accuracy of the Census.

By designating a prison cell as a residence in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau concentrated a population that is disproportionately male, urban, and African-American or Latino into just 5,393 Census blocks that are located far from the actual homes of incarcerated people. In Illinois, this resulted in 11 House districts that derived 2 or more percent of their population from people incarcerated at correctional facilities located within the districts. There are also important racial considerations at play in the state, where African Americans are considerably overrepresented in Illinois prisons and jails. Across the state, African Americans make up 15% of the total population but account for 56% of the incarcerated population.

Currently, four states (California, Delaware, Maryland, and New York) are taking a state-wide approach to adjust the Census' population totals to count incarcerated people at home, and over

200 counties and municipalities all individually adjust population data to avoid prison gerrymandering when drawing their local government districts.

But this ad hoc approach is neither efficient nor universally implementable. The Massachusetts legislature, for example, concluded that the state constitution did not allow it to pass similar legislation, so it sent the Bureau a resolution in 2014 urging the Bureau to tabulate incarcerated persons at their home addresses. *See* The Massachusetts General Court Resolution “Urging the Census Bureau to Provide Redistricting Data that Counts Prisoners in a Manner Consistent with the Principles of ‘One Person, One Vote’” (Adopted by the Senate on July 31, 2014 and the House of Representatives on August 14, 2014).

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Residence Rule and Residence Situations as the Bureau strives to count everyone in the right place in keeping with changes in society and population realities. Because Common Cause Illinois believes in a population count that accurately represents communities, we urge you to count incarcerated people as residents of their home address.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Gladstein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Brian Gladstein
Director of Programs and Strategy
Common Cause Illinois