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census

1 message

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To: POP.2020.Residence.Rule@census.gov

Tue, Jun 16, 2015 at 1:21 PM

Karen Humes, Chief, Population Division,
U.S. Census Bureau, Room 5H174
Washington, DC 20233 or Email

June 16, 2015

Dear Ms. Humes,

The Lionheart Foundation 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). I urge 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.

The Lionheart Foundation works with thousands of prisoners throughout the United States. Also, I personally live in an urban community where many of the men and women in the community are incarcerated in small towns far from their homes. By designating a prison cell as a residence in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau concentrated this population that is disproportionately male, urban, and African-American or Latino into into just 5,393 Census blocks that are located far from the actual homes.

In fairness to all citizens and to preserve the democracy, the growth in the prison population requires the Census to update its methodology to count people where their true home is situated. The manner in which this population is counted now has huge implications for the accuracy of the Census.

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 universality 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 The Lionheart Foundation believes in a population count that accurately represents communities, we urge you to count incarcerated people as residents of their home address.

Sincerely,

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