



Via Email

July 16, 2015

Ms. Karen Humes
Chief, Population Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Room 5H174
Washington, DC 20233
Pop.2020.residence.rule@census.gov

Re: 2020 Decennial Census Residence Rule and Residence Situations
Docket No. 150409353-5353

Dear Ms. Humes,

Project Vote submits this comment in response to the Census Bureau's Federal Register notice entitled, 2020 Decennial Census Residence Rule and Residence Situations, 80 FR 28950 (May 20, 2015), Docket No. 150409353-5353. Project Vote urges you to count incarcerated people at their home address, rather than at the particular facility at which they happen to be located on Census day.

Project Vote is a national nonpartisan, non-profit organization dedicated to building an electorate that accurately represents the diversity of America's citizenry. Project Vote takes a leadership role in nationwide voting rights and election administration issues, working through research, litigation, and advocacy to ensure that every eligible citizen can register, vote, and cast a ballot that counts.

Because African-Americans and Latinos are disproportionately incarcerated, counting incarcerated people in the wrong location is particularly detrimental to proper representation of African-American and Latino communities. These communities are already historically underrepresented in the electorate and prison gerrymandering only contributes to this problem. Thus 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 blocks¹ that are located far from the actual homes of incarcerated people. When this data is used for redistricting, prisons artificially inflate the political power of the areas where the prisons are located.

Various states, including New York, California, Delaware, and Maryland, have taken statewide action to end prison gerrymandering when drawing districts, and other localities have made similar efforts.² But this ad hoc approach cannot be implemented universally. The Massachusetts legislature, for example, concluded that the state constitution did not allow it to pass similar legislation, so in 2014 it passed and sent the Census Bureau a resolution urging the Bureau to count incarcerated persons at their home addresses.³ A national approach is needed to ensure proper representation of communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the 2020 Decennial Census Residence Rule and Residence Situations. Because Project Vote believes in a population count that accurately represents communities, we urge you to count incarcerated people as residents of their home address.

Sincerely,

Michael Slater
President
Project Vote

¹ Prison Gerrymandering Project, *Detailed Demographics of Correctional Populations Now Available for Nation* (Sept. 13, 2011),

<http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/news/2011/09/13/sf1/> (last visited July 7, 2015).

² Prison Gerrymandering Project, Legislation,

<http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/legislation.html> (last visited July 7, 2015).

³ 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’” (188th Session, Adopted by the Senate on July 31, 2014 and the House of Representatives on August 14, 2014), *available at*

<http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/resolutions/MA-resolution-081414.pdf>.