

SOUTHERN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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July 6, 2015

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

Dear Chief Humes,

The Southern Center for Human Rights (SCHR) 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). SCHR 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.

The Southern Center for Human Rights (SCHR) is a nonprofit law firm based in Atlanta, Georgia, that dedicated to providing legal representation to people facing the death penalty, challenging human rights violations in prisons and jails, seeking through litigation and advocacy to improve legal representation for poor people accused of crimes, and advocating for criminal justice reform on behalf of those affected by the system in the Southern United States.

In the course of carrying out our work, it has become increasingly clear that it is imperative to end prison gerrymandering so that we may ensure equal representation throughout Georgia. **SCHR 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.**

Georgia has a relatively high incarceration rate, currently locking up more than one person for each group of 200 people. But many of the state's prisons are located in sparsely populated areas, resulting in a significant distortion in how the Census portrays these communities. In ten Georgia counties, more than 10% of the county's Census population is incarcerated. Twenty percent of Calhoun County is incarcerated. These are not the most punitive counties in the state, they just happen to be the places where the prisons are located.

Nine Georgia House Districts drawn after the 2000 Census derived more than 5% of their required population from incarcerated, disenfranchised people. One district was almost 11% incarcerated, giving every 89 people who live in that district with the prison as much influence as 100 people who live in another other district in the state that does not contain a large prison.

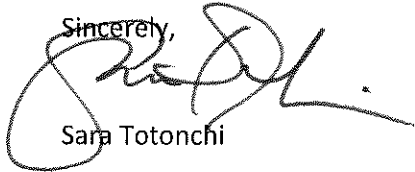
There are significant political differences between the places that most incarcerated individuals come from and the places where they are incarcerated. An analysis by the state Department of Corrections found more Georgia prison inmates come from Atlanta zip code 30318 than any other of the state's 965 ZIP codes. Atlanta as a whole is city that strongly votes with the Democratic Party, yet due to prison gerrymandering,

residents of conservative Butts County (Georgia District 3) were given twice as much influence over county affairs as residents of other districts because 49% of District 3 was incarcerated at the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Center.

Either the Census Bureau needs to change how it counts prisoners, or states like Georgia need to find their own ways to count their population prior to redrawing district boundary lines. Otherwise, the geographic and racial disparities in our criminal justice system will continue to spill over into our electoral system.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Totonchi', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Sara Totonchi