

Letter to the editor: Prison populations have little effect

The Bulletin

Posted Jul 21, 2012 @ 10:00 PM

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I'm thrilled The Bulletin has called for passing legislation that counts incarcerated people's hometowns for redistricting purposes. For the last decade, I've studied how the Census Bureau's method of counting inmates as if they were willing residents of the prison distorts the democratic process. And as you note, the national trend is for states to develop procedures to count them at their home addresses for redistricting purposes.

I did want to clarify one important detail, however. It turns out that where prison populations are counted has almost no impact on federal or state funds. It is true that many federal and state funding formulas are distributed in part on population, but our research has shown that almost all of these programs are either blocks grants to the states, or programs that are far too sophisticated to be fooled by where incarcerated people are counted.

That data point aside, The Bulletin is to be commended for raising the prison count issue in its July 17 editorial. The only way the legislature is going to end the practice of diluting the votes of everyone who does not live next to the large prisons in Enfield is if the public demands that they do.

PETER WAGNER
Easthampton, Mass.

Peter Wagner is executive director of the Prison Policy Initiative and co-author of the report "Importing Constituents: Prisoners and Political Clout in Connecticut."

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John R. McCommas

4 days ago

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And to think towns like Brooklyn have been getting away with this all these years. God **** them!
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