

March 4, 2010

Testimony before the Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
Maryland State Senate

SB 400 - No Representation Without Population Act

Position: FAVORABLE

Maryland PIRG requests a favorable report of Senate Bill 400, which would ensure prisoners are counted in their home district (not the district where the prison is located) for the purpose of drawing legislative districts.

Currently, legislative districts are drawn to include prison populations based on the location of the prisons. However, most prisoners are not from the legislative district of the prison, and most do not stay in the legislative district of the prison once they are released. As a result, this practice unfairly distributes the voting power of individuals in the state. For example, prisoners make up 18% of the population of Washington County, and 64% of the population in District 1 in Somerset County. And of course, prisoners in Maryland do not have the same voting rights as other citizens.

SB 400 can correct this imbalance by using the U.S. Census Bureau's new data that will contain specific information for correctional facilities. The U.S. Census Bureau recognized the problem before conducting the most recent census, and consequently, has worked to collect the information and ensure it is available for state use.

Thank you for your consideration, and we hope to see a favorable report for SB 400.