July 13, 2015

Karen Humes

Chief, Population Division

U.S. Census Bureau, Room 5H174

Washington, DC 20233

Dear Karen Humes,

The League of Women Voters of the Northwoods 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). We urge you to count incarcerated people at their home address, rather than at the particular facility where they happen to be located on Census day.

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 blocks that are located far from the actual homes of the incarcerated people. For example, Wisconsin has historically drawn legislative districts so that their population-sizes are within 2% of the average. But by counting incarcerated individuals as part of the districts in which they are incarcerated, Wisconsin awards greater political representation to districts with prisons than to those without them. To make matters worse, the incarcerated individuals are disenfranchised. The number of eligible voters in the prison districts are reduced and the influence of the voters in the district is magnified. When this data is used for redistricting, prisons inflate the political power of the people who live near them.

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 League of Women Voters of the Northwoods believes in a population count that accurately represents communities and the principles of one person, one vote, we urge you to count incarcerated people as residents of their home address.

Sincerely,

Yolan Mistele

President