

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

Vol. 35-b, No. 9

PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504-1911

September 2010

## CHANGES IN VOTING DISTRICTS WITH PRISONS

What our system of "representative democracy" says it believes in is that equal numbers of people (represented by registered voters) have equal influence over the legislative process. So, after each federal census, which is held every 10 years, legislators redraw the legislative districts to equalize the population in each district.

The federal census bureau counts people in prison as if they were residents of the prison cells they inhabit. And until now, all but two states bar those imprisoned from voting. ~~This~~ those imprisoned--disproportionately urban, of color, male, and relatively young--are counted as living in one of the 1,500 prisons concentrated in rural parts of our country. This dilutes the political power of all of us outside of those districts.

For example, there is actually a city ward in Anamosa Iowa, where the average population of wards is 1,300, that has only 56 residents outside of the prison located there. Those few have literally 25 the influence over city affairs as people who live in other parts of town.

Due in large part to the work of the Prison Policy Initiative, three states have now pledged to count incarcerated people as living in their actual homes, rather than where they are imprisoned--for redistricting purposes. These are: New York, Maryland and Delaware. This is especially important since, currently, only two states--Maine and Vermont--permit those imprisoned to themselves vote (see front page article in August CPR Newsletter).

In August, New York followed the example of Maryland and passed legislation which would keep legislative districts from being based on counting those imprisoned in state prisons there as part of their populations. When legislative districts are redrawn in 2011, 26,000 New York city prisoners will be counted as part of their home communities in the five boroughs of NYC.

Since 1982, 33 New York prisons have been built in rural upstate communities. There are seven New York state senate districts which now depend on prison-based gerrymandering to maintain their existence. For the last 30 years, powerful political interests in the state have supported retention of the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws, which have resulted in a dramatic rise in the prison population.

Together with the real possibility of and expansion of the right to vote by imprisoned citizens, these changes in how prisoners are counted by the census can be a positive step forward in our struggle.

### KATRINA'S OFFSPRING: A GIANT JAIL

There are currently 3,500 people imprisoned in the Orleans Parish Prison (OPP), 2,700 of whom are city prisoners. This is the highest rate of detention of any urban jail in the country, and is three times the national average rate. Given the present population of New Orleans, to be in line with the national detention rate, the jail would have space for approximately 850 people.

The Sheriff of the Parish plans to rebuild OPP call for space for 5,800 people, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of people being held at OPP are there for nonviolent, municipal, or traffic charges that would much more appropriately be diverted to other programs, with a major cost-savings to taxpayers and the city government.

While the cost to build the jail will fall mostly on FEMA, these funds, of course, could be spent on building other actually needed facilities, such as substance abuse or mental health treatment centers. The cost of operating the jail will fall entirely on the city government and is calculated to be \$22.39 [er day per person..

### THE TRUE COST OF WAR

So far: \$1 trillion. Jobs for the unemployed would cost only \$765 billion.

**CRIME OF THE MONTH aka Crimetoppers**

U.S. Army private Bradley Manning is in jail in Quantico VA. He is accused of leaking a large number of computer files to an internet site called Wikileaks. The documents demonstrated the corruption of the W.\$ invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, yet the only one being prosecuted is a private with a conscience.

In April 1963, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, from the Birmingham jail:

"Like a boil that can never be cured as long as it is covered up, but must be opened with all its pus-flowing ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must likewise be exposed, with all of the tension its exposing craters, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured."

Private Manning has opened the boil, letting the pus flow. That is good medical practice, but the heroic healer is being prosecuted.

An examination of the pus reveals: a secret assassination unit, the killing of civilians and the cover-up of many of these killings, as well as many other criminal acts.

The defendants are the Defense Department and its collaborators, and the Crimes of the Month include: murder, (a U.S. gun ship killed 19 civilians in Iraq including journalists and children), intimidation of a witness, and malicious prosecution.

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This two page version of the CPR monthly newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. All others who would like to get it MUST send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope (up to 12 at one time) for every issue they would like to receive.

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests in order to stay on our mailing list and to receive the year-end holiday card/new calendar.

We remain debt free, but continue to need your financial contributions to meet our ongoing operating expenses.

Please note: the ONLY address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504.

Many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making the newsletter available on-line at: <http://www.realcostofprisons.org/coalition.html>. Download it and mail it in to comrades and loved ones who are locked up!

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**GIRA: 200 ANOS DE SER BICENTENARIO DE MEXICO**

**¡Hoy más que nunca: Vive México!  
200 años orgullosamente mexicanos  
septiembre: mes de la patria**

**¡Homenaje a los restos de los Héroes  
de la Patria!**

**Envia tu participación y compártela  
con México**

**La Independencia de México no es sólo  
como un hecho consumado, también como  
fundamento e inspiración de un futuro  
necesario.**

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**VOICES FROM INSIDE**

Mt Olive WV June 8, 2010

In exchange for allowing Keefe to rip off prison inmates, Keefe kicks-back 9% of the profits to WV DOC. The more money Keefe can make by robbing inmates, the more lucrative the "commission." Some of the money is alleged to go into what the prison calls the "inmate benefit funds and the cable is paid for from the inmate fund.

La Crosse WI August 30, 2010

The purpose of writing is to convey the conditions at La Crosse County Jail so that someone could help us.

The only phones we have access to are monitored and recorded; the prosecuting attorneys have access to our conversations

The attorney/client booths have intercoms which the Sheriff's department can monitor. The walls are so thin you can hear what's being said in the adjoining booth.

La Crosse County just spent \$30 million for a jail addition with 100 more beds.

[SIGNED BY 24 PRISONERS]

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**Day to Stand in Solidarity for  
WORLD ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY  
of Executions and of Life Without Parole  
October 10, 2010**