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# Colorado

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## Prison Moratorium Coalition

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*Prevention, treatment, and alternatives work  
Prison should be the last resort*

### *Southern Regional Office*

2508½ W. Colorado Ave.  
Suite 3  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
80904

#### *phone*

(719) 475-8059

#### *fax*

(719) 475-0530

### *Headquarters*

c/o Rocky Mountain Peace and  
Justice Center  
P.O. Box 1156  
Boulder, Colorado  
80306

#### *phone*

(303) 444-6981

#### *fax*

(303) 444-6523

#### *website*

[www.prison-moratorium.org](http://www.prison-moratorium.org)

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**Contact: Stephen Raher, (719) 475-8059 or [stephen@epimethian.org](mailto:stephen@epimethian.org)**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Census methods result in inflated populations for rural Colorado**

As Coloradans have been eagerly examining the recently released Census data, one obscure but significant factor has been largely overlooked. The standards followed by the Census Bureau specify that people in prison are to be counted as residents of the county in which they are incarcerated. This quirk used to be statistically insignificant, but with over 16,000 Coloradans in prison, inmates are becoming more demographically important.

As a result of the Census Bureau policy, rural counties which house prisons have artificially inflated census populations, thus opening the door for a larger share of the nearly \$2 trillion in federal funds that are tied to census populations.

Moreover, despite the fact that Colorado prisoners cannot vote, inmates are counted as residents when legislative and congressional districts are re-drawn (a practice that some critics have equated to the "three fifths" clause in the U.S. Constitution concerning slaves and Congressional representation).

Prisoners help to distort other census-derived statistics as well. Since 51% of Colorado prisoners are African-American or Latino, the racial diversity of rural prison communities becomes artificially high. More importantly, prisoners typically earn a few dollars per day for their work in prison jobs. This income is entered into the census calculations, significantly lowering the median income for prison communities. As a result, more money for poverty relief programs flows into counties and towns that host prisons.

Colorado saw 8,821 new prison beds become available between the 1990 census and the 2000 census. One thousand forty of these beds were in Cañon City (the historical "prison capital" of the state) and 5,767 (65%) of the beds were located in counties in the eastern plains of Colorado. As a result, non-metropolitan counties in Colorado that had new prisons built between 1990 and 2000 had an average population increase of 28.0% between the two censuses. But when prisoners are taken out of the calculations, the population increase for these counties was actually 17.6%, significantly less than the statewide average increase for non-metropolitan counties--32.6%. See the table on page 2 for more details.

Manipulated census data is one of many flaws in the Colorado prison system. The Colorado Prison Moratorium Coalition is a network of over 80 organizations and faith communities across the state who have come together to advocate for an end to prison expansion. Along with this message, the Coalition advocates rational policy debate and policy change with regard to drug policy, parole policy, and possible alternative strategies that are more effective and cost-efficient than prisons.

<b>County</b>	<b>1999 Census Population</b>	<b>1990 Pop. w/o Prisoners</b>	<b>2000 Census Population</b>	<b>2000 Pop. w/o Prisoners</b>	<b>% Change w/ Prsnrs.</b>	<b>% Change w/o Prisoners</b>
Bent	5,048	5,048	5,998	5,314	19	5
Crowley	3,946	2,978	5,518	4,180	40	40
Fremont	32,273	29,308	46,145	38,279	43	31
Huerfano	6,009	6,009	7,862	7,128	31	19
Kit Carson	7,140	7,140	8,011	7,568	12	6
Lincoln	4,529	4,529	6,087	5,136	34	13
Logan	17,567	17,567	20,504	19,187	17	9