

NEWS...

...from State Representative La Shawn Ford

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

State Rep. La Shawn Ford

Phone: 773-378-5902

Ford Passes Bill to Count Prison Inmates in Home Communities for Redistricting

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – In an effort to provide more fair and accurate representation in the state Legislature, state Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, passed a bill requiring the redistricting process to reflect prison inmates as residents of their home communities, rather than the prisons where they are housed.

“As chairman of the Restorative Justice Committee, I believe that this is the right thing to do for Illinois. Counting incarcerated citizens as residents of a prison skews population numbers, and unfairly shifts representation away from some of the communities that need it the most,” Ford said. “Under the current system of determining representation in the General Assembly, a prisoner can be incarcerated for only a few months, but be counted as a resident of a rural district for a decade. Equal representation is vital in providing a fair government, and areas with more residents in prison are at a disadvantage. We must correct this flaw, and make sure that those communities have a voice to address the re-entry and public safety needs brought on by crime.”

Currently, census figures used to redraw state legislative districts every ten years count inmates as residents of the prisons in which they are housed, artificially inflating populations of the downstate counties where prisons are located. Ford’s House Bill 62 will require the Secretary of State to adjust these numbers before legislative districts are redrawn, so prisoners are counted as residents of their last known addresses. If a prisoner does not have a residential address in Illinois, they will not be included in redistricting data.

“The United States was born from the idea that people should have their interests represented in government,” said John Maki, executive director of the John Howard Association. “Since that time, we have been fighting to fulfill the promise of that idea. House Bill 62 is an important part of this struggle. Its passage in the House is a critical step forward in protecting the democratic rights of Illinois’ almost 50,000 prisoners and the communities which they come from and will return to.”

For more information, contact one of Ford’s constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at 708-445-3673, 5104 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at 773-378-5902 or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at 217-782-5962.

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