

**People's Organization For Progress
P.O. Box 22505
Newark, N. J. 07101
(973) 801-0001**

**Testimony before the Senate State Government, Wagering,
Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee**

May 14, 2012

The People's Organization for Progress (POP), a member of the Integrated Justice Alliance, expresses its strong support for S1055, which requires incarcerated individuals from New Jersey to be counted at their residential addresses for legislative redistricting and related purposes.

POP is a multiracial independent grassroots community organization, with largely African-American leadership, based in Newark, New Jersey. Because of the experiences of our members and our community with the criminal justice system, and the disproportionate imprisonment of the economically disadvantaged people of color from our community, we have a great interest in all aspects of how the prison system impacts on our community.

I do not need to repeat the arguments and statistical information provided by my colleagues about how prison-based gerrymandering affects Essex County and our city of Newark. I only want to stress here that the vast majority of the thousands of people who are released from the jails and prisons in our state return to disproportionately powerless communities like ours - communities which have historically had to struggle, and continue to struggle against political, social and economic policies which create barriers to our democracy and our people's well being. Prison-based gerrymandering, like the disenfranchisement of people who have been imprisoned, presents another such policy, which we are committed to resisting.

We urge you, therefore, to move Senator Cunningham's bill forward, and demonstrate your commitment to fairness and democracy.

Thank you.

Lawrence Hamm
Lawrence Hamm, Chair

Jean Ross, Esq.
Jean Ross, Esq.