

# Redistricting bill excludes inmates

By Chris Gregory  
Managing Editor

A new piece of legislation from the Tennessee General Assembly will spare Trousdale County from a major disruption.

SB 1811 (HB 2053) allows counties to exclude residents of correctional institutions when considering local redistricting. The measure was introduced in the State Senate by Ferrell Haile and in the State House by Terri Lynn Weaver.

"The concern was, that under previous law, the prisoners would be counted in their location," said Steve Paxton, Administrator of Elections for Trousdale County. "You would suddenly have 2,552 people counted in District 2.

"The districts have to be comparably equal... there's no way we could have 10 districts at that point. We just don't have that number of people."

The need for roughly equal population numbers in each district

would then have raised a further problem.

"We would have to go down to three, maybe four, districts, with three commissioners in each district," Paxton added. "Our charter is very specific in the number of districts and commissioners. It would have meant making a charter amendment to do that."

The inmates at Trousdale's CCA prison will still be counted in terms of state and federal representation.

After passing the Senate on a 31-0 vote and the House by a 66-25 margin, Gov. Bill Haslam signed the measure into law last Wednesday.

"The situation (Trousdale) has, with a small population and a prison with a large population, really created a problem," Sen. Haile said. "This will help other counties as well."

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