

# SENATOR JAMES COLEMAN



Senator James R. Coleman was born and raised in the Park Hill neighborhood of Denver and is a resident of the district he so proudly represents: Senate District 33. Coleman served his first term in 2016, becoming the youngest elected to Colorado's state legislature. After serving 2 terms as the State Representative of House District 7, he went on to win his election to the Senate District 33 seat in November 2020. Senator Coleman currently serves as the Senate President Pro Tem, Chair of the Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee, and Vice-Chair of the Legislative Oversight Committee Concerning Colorado Jail Standards. He also serves on the Senate Appropriations and Senate Business, Labor, and Technology Committees, as well as the Legislative Council and Colorado Youth Advisory Council Committees.

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Throughout his years in the Colorado General Assembly, Senator Coleman has energetically sponsored bills to better fund and resource schools, protect workers' and veterans' rights, bolster small businesses, create opportunities for and pathways to higher education, increase health coverage and mental/behavioral health supports, direct criminal justice reforms, and preserve our environment. His groundbreaking legislation is anchored not only in advocacy for the Black community, but also, in his three legislative priorities: **eliminating the Black wealth gap, decreasing prison recidivism, and ending youth violence.**

## Education

Senator Coleman understands the importance of our schools, especially as a means to finding positive ways to engage youth and guiding them towards postsecondary options. His bills strive to improve public education for every student in Colorado - by providing [professional development](#) opportunities to educators, addressing [shortages in educators](#), and ensuring that families of students have information, as early as middle school, about [concurrent enrollment](#).

Our students deserve access to resources and experiences that allow them to determine their next steps in life, whether it be joining Colorado's workforce or pursuing higher education. Coleman's bills reflect exactly that; helping to increase [financial aid application completion](#) rates, remove barriers to [supplemental instruction and success](#) in higher education, and create innovative, [outside of classroom learning opportunities](#). His legislation even [protects the rights of student athletes](#) to be compensated for the use of their name, image, and likeness - a right society has waited all too long to codify.

## Business

Coleman's bills champion for the employee, and for the minority, new, and small business owner alike. One of his earliest bills sought to encourage [employee ownership of existing small businesses](#) -

a bill which ultimately led to the Governor's creation of the Employee Ownership Commission. This ongoing program advances the employee-owned model in Colorado to help increase business success and employee motivation throughout the state.

Later, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit - both creating and further exasperating disparities and inequity across the board. After learning that 40% of Denver's already underrepresented Black owned businesses were forced to shut their doors, he passed a bill creating the [Colorado Startup Loan Program](#), in order to get loans and wraparound services in the hands of businesses seeking to start or restructure.

Coleman has also designed policy to increase [social equity within the Colorado cannabis industry](#) - yet another industry that has historically criminalized Black Americans while allowing others to profit. Under Coleman's bill, those who have not had an equal chance to participate or profit from this industry will be given more equitable opportunities to do so.

## Criminal Justice

In 2019, Coleman sponsored bipartisan legislation that made the internal files of in-uniform or on-duty peace officers subject to an [open records request](#). His policies have also delivered [mental health](#) supports for [peace officers](#), improved [traumatic brain injury studies and supports](#) within the criminal justice system and assisted the formerly incarcerated in both acquiring [state-issued identification](#) and experiencing reduced [collateral consequences](#).

Coleman is equally proud to have been directly involved in bringing about a historic police [reform and accountability](#) bill in 2020, and composing legislation that has led to the issuing of 2,732 pardons for individuals convicted of possession of a small amount of marijuana. As the first state to legalize the use of recreational marijuana, it is critical that we also lead the charge in decriminalizing it.

## Work & Family

When not in the Capitol, Coleman serves as Founder of FaithBridge Colorado, a local nonprofit quarterbacking education policy and advocacy efforts to improve K-12 education across the state of Colorado. Additionally, he serves as CEO of Black Capital Foundation, a business that raises, invests, stewards, and expands capital into Black-owned businesses in Colorado. Coleman is also Founder of Chance Sports, a scholarship organization providing assistance to Colorado youth from low-income families in order to access competitive sports programs and learn leadership and team-building skills that will benefit them both on and off the athletic field.

Coleman earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, with a minor in Business Administration, from Oral Roberts University. Coleman met his wife, Shayna Coleman, in the 8th grade and they are the proud parents of twins, James Jr. and Naomi.