

20 COLORADO 23 LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

for Black Women, Femmes & Them



Soul2Soul
SISTERS

why we **engage** in the legislative session

Too often, decisions are made about Black communities without our input and expertise. The pandemic and the Movement for Black Lives have illustrated how important local policies are to our communities and how these policies directly impact our lives. We have always taken to the streets in protests to draw attention to the issues that matter to us and, by bringing our demands to our state capitol, **we can turn that attention into real action that will benefit our communities.**

When we're able to illustrate to legislators how our personal experiences are impacted by policies, we make it harder for decision makers to ignore our demands. Soul 2 Soul Sisters has big plans to keep our communities politically engaged and hold our elected officials accountable – not to the promises that they made during their election campaigns, but to life-changing legislation that Black Women, trans, and gender-expansive beloveds are demanding. **We know that Black Women's political power is a force to be reckoned with and THIS is why we engage in all levels of the political process.**

how to use this **guide**

This guide is designed to give you quick, important information about what's happening at the Colorado capitol and how to take action. It contains a list of important terms with definitions, descriptions of how a bill becomes a law, how to take action on different bills, and where to find out more information. Explore the links for more in-depth information on how to engage this legislative session.

This guide centers our radical policy priorities by explicitly focusing on the issues and policies that shape Black communities.



About Us

Soul 2 Soul Sisters is a fiercely loved-based, Black Women & femme-centered, racial justice 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that focuses on Black healing and Black liberation. Our Black Civic Engagement program is a Black-led, non-partisan program that is committed to consistently advocating for the dismantling of anti-Black oppression within our institutions - at the legislature, the ballot box, and beyond. We do this work by running and policies that keep our people safe and thriving, building a bridge between decision makers and our community, creating opportunities for collective knowledge-building on issues that impact us the most, and fostering spaces for Black people to heal from political harm. You can learn more or sign-up to volunteer at soul2soulsisters.org.



Glossary

- **Legislation:** the preparation and enactment of laws
- **Legislative session:** a yearly meeting of the general assembly for the purpose of creating new laws and updating existing laws. Colorado's legislative session typically runs from January-May.
- **General assembly:** the term for Colorado's House of Representatives and Senate
- **Legislators:** members of a legislative body. Legislators are either in the House or Senate
- **Senators:** Legislators who were elected to the Senate
- **Representatives:** Legislators who were elected to the House of Representatives
- **Constituents:** the group of people who are represented by legislators. This is typically determined by where a person lives. Here's where you can look up who your legislator is.
- **Bills:** another term for proposed legislation/laws. Here's where you can keep track of bills.
- **HB/SB:** These acronyms are seen at the beginning of every bill. They stand for House Bill and Senate Bill, and indicate whether a bill started in the House or the Senate (eg. HB23-1187). Every bill goes through both the House and the Senate
- **Kill a bill:** when a bill does not proceed through the rest of the steps, it does not pass, and it does not become law. May also be referred to as "postponed indefinitely"

Glossary

- **Committee:** a set group of legislators who meet during the legislative session to consider issue-specific legislation. For example, the Senate Education committee is made up of Senators who discuss bills related to education.
- **Committee of the whole:** This refers to the full Senate or House when they meet to discuss bills. If a bill passes out of committee, it may be sent to the “Committee of the Whole” to discuss and vote on it
- **Testimony:** when a member of the public (like you!) provides a statement on a bill that is under consideration in a committee at the State Capitol.
- **Lobbying:** the act of attempting to influence a legislator’s decisions, policies or opinion on an issue through informed persuasion
- **Nonpartisan:** a lack of affiliation with, endorsement of, or opposition to any political party or candidate
- **The Long Bill:** The annual appropriations bill that allocates funding for state departments
- **Joint Budget Committee (JBC):** The General Assembly's permanent fiscal and budget review agency, which writes the annual appropriations bill (AKA the Long Bill)

How a Bill Becomes a **LAW** in Colorado



STEP 1: INTRODUCTION

Senators or Representatives introduce the bill in their respective chamber – either the Senate or the House.



STEP 3: SECOND READING

The bill is heard again in the Senate or House where all Senators or Representatives vote on whether the bill should continue the process to become law or not. This is also an opportunity to introduce amendments and debate the bill.



STEP 2: COMMITTEE

The bill is assigned to a committee where a small group of Senators or Representatives will hear testimony, discuss, and determine if it should continue through the process to become law or not.

STEP 4: THIRD READING

After amendments and debate, the bill is heard again in the Senate or House where all Senators or Representatives vote on whether the bill should continue the process to become law or not.



STEP 5: REPEAT THE PROCESS

After passing out of its 3rd reading, the bill must go through the same process in the other chamber. For example, if the bill passed through the Senate, it goes to the House for deliberation.

STEP 6: GOVERNOR'S DESK!

After the bill goes through all these steps twice, it gets sent to the Governor for approval or veto. If the Governor approves, the bill is signed into law!



For an in-depth explanation of the legislative process, visit <https://leg.colorado.gov/>



ISSUES WE'RE WORKING ON

We recognize that there are many issues that impact Black communities. This year we have identified four priority issue areas based on our mission and values: economic justice, reproductive justice, criminal justice, and electoral justice.

Reproductive Justice

For reproductive justice, we are tracking bills at the state and federal levels that expand access to healthcare and increase safety for families.

Colorado Bills we SUPPORT

- HB23-1187: Alternatives In Criminal Justice System And Pregnant Persons: This bill would ensure that people who are pregnant or postpartum (defined as one year after the end of pregnancy) have better access to alternative sentencing options when facing incarceration. Take action to support this bill [here](#).
- HB23-1077: Informed Consent on Intimate Patient Examinations: This bill would prohibit medical providers from conducting intimate examinations on patients without their consent.

Economic Justice

For economic justice, we are tracking bills at the state and federal level that make progress on redistributing wealth towards Black communities. In Colorado and at the federal level, we are paying attention to issues related to housing justice and healthcare affordability.

Colorado Bills we SUPPORT

- HB23-1126: Consumer Reports Not Include Medical Debt Information: This bill prohibits the inclusion of medical debt that is in collections in credit reports. Take action to support this bill [here](#).
- HB23-1155: Repeal Prohibition Local Residential Rent Control: This bill would repeal a ban that prohibits municipalities and counties from enacting rent control policies.

Criminal Justice

For criminal justice, we are tracking bills that make progress on redistributing wealth towards Black communities. In Colorado and at the federal level, we are paying attention to issues related to keeping families connected during incarceration and reducing rates of criminalization for our communities.

Colorado bills we Supports

- HB23-1133: Cost Of Phone Calls For Persons In Custody: This bill would require that all phone calls and other forms of communication be free for people in Colorado state prisons. Take action to support the bill [here](#).

Electoral Justice

For electoral justice, we are tracking bills that protect and increase access to democracy for all communities, including breaking down barriers to participating in our elections and expanding and protecting our voting rights. There are more bills to come related to this issue in Colorado, but please see below for bill(s) we are supporting on the federal level:

Federal bills we SUPPORT

- John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act: This bill would enable the federal government to hold states accountable to protecting voting rights by requiring that states where multiple voting rights violations have occurred get clearance before making legal changes that would impact voting rights. Take action to support the bill [here](#).

Ways To Take Action

We encourage our communities to take action because it's important for legislators to hear from the communities they are serving. Oftentimes, Black folks aren't centered when bills are created, and this is an opportunity to hold decision makers accountable to the impact of policy making on the day to day lives of our people.

- [Sign up here](#) if you live in Colorado and are interested in giving testimony:
- Call your legislator(s) and ask them to vote yes on the bills we listed. Legislators need to hear from their constituents in order to do their jobs well, so it's important that we make our voices heard! You'll probably talk to their legislative aide or leave a voicemail. [Here's where you can look up who your legislator is](#). You can use this sample script:
 - ***“Please vote yes on [BILL NUMBER]. This issue is important to me personally because [YOUR REASONS]. This bill is a step in the right direction and our community needs it.”***
- Write a Letter to the Editor (LTE) for your local newspaper about an issue you care about and why the public should be taking action too.
- [Sign up for our newsletter!](#) We send legislative updates twice a month with calls to action so you can get involved!

find out more

This guide is designed to give you quick important information on what's happening at the Colorado State Capitol and ways you can take action. AND there's a lot more information out there. If you're looking to read more about the legislature, we recommend checking out the Colorado General Assembly website: www.leg.colorado.gov/. If you have any questions about this guide and/or how to get involved this session, please reach out to us at info@soul2soulsisters.org.

