

Colorado Voting Guide

Founded in 1999, CCJRC is a network of organizations, faith communities, and individuals working to eliminate the overuse of the criminal justice system and advance community health and safety in Colorado. 1212 Mariposa St. #6, Denver, CO 80204 | www.ccjrc.org | info@ccjrc.org | 303 825-0122

April 2023 - Jasmine Ross- Civic Engagement Manager

Since 2006, CCJRC has run the only civic engagement campaign in Colorado that focuses exclusively on helping people with criminal backgrounds figure out if they are eligible to vote and help them register to vote, if they are. CCJRC also does community outreach, voter education, and training because a lot of people think that having a criminal record makes someone ineligible to vote. This is not true in Colorado! We hope this guide will provide you with useful information and inspire you to see the importance and value of voting!

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What is Civic Engagement?

Civic engagement is getting involved to help your community. This can be done individually or with a group of like-minded people. There are many ways to engage. One important way is to participate in elections.

The Importance of Voting

Voting is one way of contributing to our democracy. Democracy means the power of the people, where a way of governing depends on the will of the people. For the last election in 2022, 59% of people eligible to vote in Colorado voted, which ranked us sixth highest in the nation behind Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Michigan. But that means over 40% of people didn't vote which is a lot of missing voices. There can be a lot of different reason why people didn't vote.

- We may think that our vote doesn't matter.
- We may not know enough about the candidates to know who to vote for or we may not like any of the candidates running for election.
- We are not registered to vote and may not know how to register to vote.
- Or with busy lives, we may not think we have the time to vote.

There are many other reasons people decide not to vote. However, whatever those reasons are, here are some things we hope will encourage and inspire you to vote in all elections.

TIPS

Throughout this guide, you will see examples of how voting doesn't just get people elected; elections can also decide critical issues that affect you, your family, and your community. Remember, voting is our constitutional right. In the past, most people didn't have the right to vote and for some, that may still be the case. But we must always be involved to better our communities. When we vote, the candidate we voted for or our position on a ballot measure may not have "won". This does not mean that our votes do not matter.

Candidates and Ballot Measures

If you want to know more about a candidate that is running for office or a ballot measure, there are a lot of resources to help you be better informed. In addition to candidates, people can also be voting on a ballot measure to change a law or taxes.

Here are a couple of pointers.

- Candidates often have a campaign website, which can include detailed information on their platform and personal story.

 A platform is a candidate's statement of their views and plans for what they would like to accomplish if elected to office.

 Candidate's platforms can tell you a lot about their policy priorities, positions, and beliefs, on a range of political and social issues.
- You can also attend community forums where you can hear from the candidate directly and may be able to ask questions.
- Many community groups put out a voter guide to provide voters with additional information.

Often you will find a candidate whose views or goals are similar to yours. The same is true for ballot measures that will also have a website, community forums, and voter guides to help you be more informed.

For those of you who are eligible to vote but will be in jail for the election, it will be harder to get more information but maybe a family member or a friend can mail you information on candidates and ballot measures.

Registration

Getting registered to vote is a quick and easy task. If you are an eligible voter who is in jail, you can ask a deputy for a registration form. (please see the Colorado Eligibility information on the next page to read about eligibility for those who are in jail or have had a past criminal history.)

For others, you can visit the Secretary of State's website Colorado Secretary of State -coloradosos.gov. On the Secretary of State's website you can register online or print out the voter registration form and take it to your county election division to get processed. When you get or renew your driver's license or state ID, you are automatically registered to vote, unless you ask them not to.

Fun fact

Colorado is a same-day voter registration and voting state. This means that up to and on Election Day you can register and vote. Some jail facilities may set up a polling center in the jail for in-person voting, otherwise voting will most likely be by mail.

Process for Voting

Colorado has mail-in voting for every election, so you don't have to wait in line to cast your ballot. This also applies for people in jail that are eligible to vote. Also, Colorado has early voting. You can call your county election division to get the time and dates of when those events occur. Colorado has done a lot to make it easier for people to vote.

Inspirationa	l Quotes!
"Whatever affects one directly,	affects all indirectly!"
"Voting is POWER!	Martin Luther King, Jr.
Political Opportunity With E	qual Representation!"
	Jasmine Ross
Create Your Own Quote!	
«	"
Your name here	



CCJRC's Jasmine Ross accepting the Champion for Democracy Award given to CCJRC by Eunice Brownlee from Colorado Common Cause.

The History of Voting

It's easy to take for granted that most US citizens over the age of 18 have the right to vote. But the path to get here has been one of struggle and sacrifice, including people who gave their lives in the fight for the vote. There have been many changes when it comes to America's voting laws. Let's look back at some important dates in America's voting history.

In the late 1700's states generally only allowed white men ages 21 and older who owned property or paid taxes to vote, which was only about 6% of the total population.

In 1870 - The 15th Amendment to the US Constitution became law. This amendment protected the voting rights of formerly enslaved men by prohibiting people from being denied the right to vote on the basis of their race. Despite this law being passed, many formerly enslaved men faced violence if they tried to vote. Some states charged a poll tax and would sometimes make voters pass a reading test in order to vote.

In 1920 -Women nationwide won the right to vote thru the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution but women of color still faced significant barriers to voting like threats of violence, poll taxes, and reading tests.

In 1924 - The Indian Citizenship Act became law which granted US citizenship to Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the United States, including the right to vote.

In 1964 - The 24th Amendment to the US Constitution became law. This amendment outlawed poll taxes for federal elections, which required people to pay money before they could vote. The intent was to keep African Americans and lower-income people from voting. Five states still required poll tax for state elections until 1966 when the U.S. Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional.

In 1965 - The Voting Rights Act was passed by Congress and is considered one of the most significant civil rights bills in U.S. history that forbids states from using requirements like poll taxes, literacy tests and other methods to deny African Americans the right to vote. It also allowed the federal government to get involved in state's election processes in certain places if there were concerns about racial discrimination. It also required states that had a history of racial discrimination in voting to receive federal approval of any new state voting law to ensure that it did not discriminate based on race.

In 1971 - The 26th Amendment was signed into law that lowered the voting age to 18.

In 1975 - New provisions were added to the 1965 Voting Rights Act to require that voting materials be provided in other languages where there were large populations of people who were not fluent in English. People that speak other languages must also be available to help non-English speakers at the polls.

In 1982 - Congress passed the Voting Rights Act for another 25 years and added in requirements that states make sure voting was more accessible to people with disabilities and for the elderly.

Colorado Law & Eligibility for People with Criminal Backgrounds

Colorado is not a state that prevents anyone with a criminal record from being able to vote. As of right now, the Sentencing Project reports that 4.6 million Americans in the United States are barred from voting due to laws in other states restricting this right for people with felony convictions.

So, when you ask yourself why voting is important, just remember that when you vote, you are a voice for many that cannot be heard, especially if you have the experience of being involved in the criminal legal system. Those with lived experience are not only role models for others in other states that don't quite yet have this opportunity but are also significant in helping to change and vote on issues that involve the criminal legal system. Remember, "community" does not symbolize one color; it represents all people, no matter what background we have.

Because of community pressure and engagement, Colorado was able to pass a law in 2005 (SB05-206) that allowed people in jail serving a misdemeanor sentence to vote. Another law was passed in 2019 (HB19-1266) which allowed people on parole to vote. These are perfect examples of the positivity and power to change voting laws when we all come together.

The law in Colorado on voting eligibility for justice involved people:

1-2-103, C.R.S. states: (4) No person while serving a sentence of detention or confinement in a correctional facility, jail, or other location for a felony conviction is eligible to register to vote or to vote in any election. A confined prisoner who is awaiting trial but has not been tried or who is not serving a sentence for a felony conviction shall be certified by the institutional administrator, may register to vote pursuant to this article 2, and may list his or her confinement location as his or her ballot address in accordance with Section 1-2-204(2) (f.3). An individual serving a sentence of parole is eligible to register to vote and to vote in any election.

(5) A person confined in a state institution for persons with behavioral or mental health disorders shall not lose the right to vote because of the confinement.

Know the law!

For people who are currently involved in the legal system, it is important to understand the law because whether someone is eligible to vote while they are involved in the criminal legal system can vary.

Be careful!

Eligibility to vote for people in jail can change depending on where in the criminal case process they are. For example, a person who is a pretrial detainee maybe eligible to register to vote but if they are sentenced to felony probation but required to serve 30 days in jail as a condition of probation, then they can't vote while they are in jail serving that 30 days. In Colorado, it is a class 5 felony to register to vote or vote if you aren't eligible.



KNOW THE LAW!

THE LAW CHANGED! AS OF JULY 1,2019, PEOPLE ON

YOU CAN VOTE IN COLORADO IF:

- You are a pretrial detainee in jail- or on bond or summons awaiting trial
- You are currently serving a sentence in jail for a misdemeanor
- You are on probation for misdemeanor or felony
- You were sentenced by a court to the halfway house (i.e. diversion client)
- You have a past criminal conviction and served your sentence
- You are on parole after release from state prison
- You are on federal supervised release after completing a federal prison sentence

YOU CAN'T VOTE IN COLORADO IF:

- You are serving a felony sentence in jail or prison
- You are on DOC inmate status living in a community corrections halfway house or are on non-residential status living in the community (i.e. transition client)

YOUR VOICE MATTERS! MAKE REGISTER TO VOTE AND VOTE!

You can learn more and register to vote at www.votingwithconviction.org

"WHATEVER AFFECTS ONE DIRECTLY, AFFECTS ALL INDIRECTLY"

- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

Colorado Voter Turn Out Data by Race & Ethnicity

Although Colorado has a pretty high voter turnout rate, voters of color have historically had much lower turnout rates both in state and national elections.

As we have seen historically and even in present times, voter suppression still exists in communities of color. Again, this is why it is so important to have a high-turnout rate in communities of color when it comes to voting.

As you can see from the this graph, 72% of white Coloradans who were eligible to vote did so in 2020, but among Coloradans who identified as Black, Hispanic, Asian-American, or Indigenous, voter turnout was just 53.2% of eligible voters, an 18.7% difference.

Colorado's racial turnout gap persists

Turnout rates by racial demographics, Current Population Survey estimates, 2000-2020

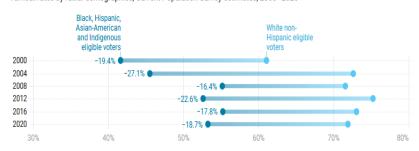
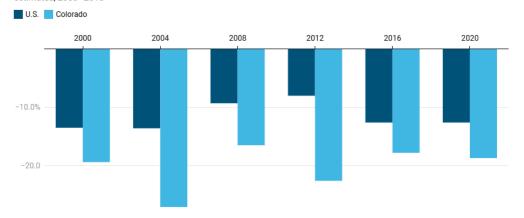


Chart: Colorado Newsline • Source: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

Source: (Colorado's racial voter-turnout gap persists, census data shows - Colorado Newsline, (9/15/2022)

Colorado's racial voter-turnout gap remains worse than the national average

Difference between turnout among white non-Hispanic eligible voters and all other eligible voters, Current Population Survey estimates, 2000–2018



This graph on the left shows that in 2020, Colorado's racial voter-turnout gap of 18.7% is worse than the national racial voter-turnout gap of 12.6%.

Source: (Colorado's racial voter-turnout gap persists, census data shows - Colorado Newsline, (9/15/2022)

Chart: Colorado Newsline • Source: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

What are the three branches of Government?

The United States was created with three branches of government to make sure that the government's power was separated and that one branch is not more powerful than the others. We call this a system of "checks and balances." The three branches of government are Legislative, Executive, and Judicial and they each have their own roles and responsibilities. There is also a version of the three branches of government at the federal, state, and local level.

Judicial Branch

Key duties of the Judicial Branch are to interpret the law, determine the constitutionality of the law, and apply it to individual cases.



Federal and district state courts, juvenile courts, appellate courts, supreme courts and probation are part of the Judicial Branch.

Executive Branch

Key duties of the Executive Branch include carrying out and enforcing laws, and the power to sign or veto legislation.



Mayors, governors, the U.S. President, and government agencies are part of the Executive branch.

Legislative Branch

Key duties of the Legislative Branch include making laws and passing public budgets.



The U.S. Congress, the Colorado House of Representatives and State Senate, city councils and county commissioners are part of the Legislative Branch.

Types of Elections

The two main types of state elections are the Primary Election and the General Election. Colorado holds these state elections every two years.

Primary Election:

A Primary Election is when the candidates from each party compete for the nomination of their party to be on the general election ballot. In Colorado, anyone who is registered with a major party (Republican, Democrat) can cast a ballot for candidates for the party they belong too. People can also register as an "unaffiliated" voter meaning they don't belong to either major party. Unaffiliated voters get to choose whether to vote in the primary of either major party. This is something unique in Colorado. Not all states allow unaffiliated voters to vote in the primary election. However, if they decided to vote in the Democrat primary, they can't vote in the Republican primary or vice versa. You can think of primary elections as similar to the AFC or NFC Conference Championship games in the NFL.

General Election:

The general election is when all candidates from qualifying political parties go head-to-head to determine who will be elected to that office from President, to City Council, or State Treasurer. In presidential election years, District Attorneys also get elected in Colorado. A General Election is like the Superbowl in the NFL.

Municipal Elections:

Are when city and county officials elected. These elections happen in odd numbered years. Municipal elections also have the breakdown of primary municipal elections and general municipal elections. These elections are called municipal elections because federal or state officials are not on the ballot.

Other kinds of elections

A **Run-Off** is when an election takes place with more than three candidates and no one candidate received a majority of the vote, then a run-off election will take place. The top two candidates with the most votes will move on to the run-off election.

Special District elections are focused on county and city level office that are focused on providing services to the citizens that live in those counties and cities. These elections are normally focused on things like: School Board, Fire Protection, Rec center boards.

Who are the elected officials?

In our elections, voters vote for federal, state, and local candidates. Sometimes it can be confusing to know what each of their roles are. This section will cover each elected candidate's role and whether there are limits on the number of years that an officeholder can serve. (Called "term limits".)

Federal Level Offices

Every state elects members to the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, also known as the Congress. Every person has one Senator and one Representative that represents them. Congress makes federal laws and passes the federal budget. The Senate must also vote to approve a Supreme Court judge.

U.S. Senate

There are 100 members of the U.S. Senate and each state elects two members. Each term is for six years. There are no term limits for US Senators.

U.S. House Representatives

There are 435 members of the U.S. House Representatives. The number of Representatives a state is allowed is based on their population size. Colorado elects eight members because we are a smaller population state. A state like New York has 26, Texas has 38, California has 52, and Wyoming has one. Each term is for two years. There are no term limits for US House Representatives.

President

The President selects their running mate for Vice President, and they are elected together. The President is responsible for implementing and enforcing federal law, appointing the heads of federal agencies, signing or vetoing legislation from Congress, nominating federal and US Supreme Court judges, and conducting foreign policy. The Vice President assists the President and would take over if the President resigns or dies. The President can serve a limit of two terms, each term is for four years, for a total of 8 years.

Vice President

The Vice President's term is also four years, but there no limit to how many terms they can serve.

State Level Offices

The State Senate and the House of Representatives make state laws and pass the state budget. Each person in Colorado has one Representative and one Senator that represents them. Go to this link to find our who your state Senator is

https://leg.colorado.gov/agencies/senate/all-senators or who your House Representative is

https://leg.colorado.gov/agencies/house-representatives/all-representatives

Colorado State Senators (35 members)

Can serve a limit of two terms in office. Each term is for four years, for a total of 8 years in office. Half of the state Senate seats are up for election every two years. Example: Next state senate election will be on November 5, 2024.

Colorado State House of Representatives (65 members)

Each term is for two years. and Representatives can serve four terms for a total of 8 years.

Governor

The Governor is responsible for implementing state laws, and appointing heads of state agencies, among other things.

Each term is for four years and the Governor can serve two terms for a total of 8 years in office.

Lieutenant Governor

The Lieutenant Governor assists the Governor and can serve as the acting governor if the Governor is absent from the state and would take over if the Governor dies, resigns or is removed. The Lieutenant Governor can serve two terms for a total of 8 years in office.

Secretary Of State

The Colorado Secretary of State oversees and administers many laws affecting for profit and nonprofit corporations, business licensing, and ensures elections are fair. Secretary of State can serve two terms for a total of 8 years in office.

State Treasurer

The State Treasurer's duties are to oversee the state's money and handle investments. The State Treasurer can serve two terms for a total of 8 years in office.

Colorado Attorney General

The Attorney General is responsible for enforcement of consumer protection and antitrust laws, natural resources and environmental matters, managing the statewide Grand Jury, and some limited role in criminal prosecutions. The Attorney General can serve two terms for a total of 8 years in office.

State Supreme Court and State Court of Appeals

The Colorado Supreme Court is the highest court in Colorado. In addition to reviewing decisions from lower state courts, they are also responsible for attorney regulation and discipline. The Governor appoints judges to serve on the Colorado Supreme Court and the Colorado Court of Appeals. The Governor must select from a list provided by the Supreme Court Nominating Commission. After being appointed, these judges serve an initial term of two years and then must be approved by voters to be retained as a judge at the next general election. There are seven justices on the Colorado Supreme Court and they serve a ten year term. There are twenty-two judges on the Colorado Court of Appeals and they serve an 8 year term.

Colorado State Board of Education (nine members)

The members of the Colorado State Board of Education are elected from each of the state's Congressional Districts plus an at-large member. They serve six-year terms and are responsible with the general supervision of public schools across the state.

Local Level Offices

Mayor

A Mayor is elected and is responsible to keep everything running for the city and select people to head local government agencies. Mayors are in command of the police, firefighters, street-maintenance, and garbage collectors just to name a few. They work closely with the City Council. The Mayor represents the executive branch of government at the local level. Local communities decide how long a Mayor's term is and whether there are term limits.

City Council

City Council members are elected and are responsible for overseeing city departments, administering city services, adopting local laws, and approve the city budget. They serve as the legislative branch of government at the city level. Local communities decide how long the terms are for City Council and whether there are term limits.

County Commissioners

County Commissioners are elected and they are responsible for overseeing county departments, administering county services, adopting county ordinances, approving land use decisions in unincorporated areas of the county and approving the county budget. Similar to City Councils, County Commissioners are the legislative branch of government for the county. Local communities decide how long the terms are for County Commissioner and whether there are term limits.

District Attorney

District Attorneys are responsible for investigating and prosecuting violations of the criminal laws that occur in their districts. Each of Colorado's twenty-two Judicial Districts elect their own District Attorney. They make decisions on what crimes that a person is charged with, any plea-bargaining, and whether they offer a diversion program. They also provide assistance to victims of crime in navigating the legal system and accessing support services. Each term is for four years. Most District Attorneys are limited to two terms in office for a total of 8 years but voters in several Judicial Districts approved expanding that to three terms in office, and Pueblo removed term limits for the District Attorney altogether.

Local School Board

School Board members are elected and are responsible for setting public school district policy, selecting the Superintendent of the school district and assessing their performance, and establishing the district culture and values. Can serve four years in office and can run for two terms.

Regional Transportation District (RTD)Board of Directors (15 members)

The Denver metro area has a Regional Transportation District Board of Directors that are elected officials who represents a specific district with in the RTD service area. They help oversee public transportation, like buses and rails. Their responsibility for the city is to ensure easy access of mobility. Can serve four years in office and can run for two terms.

Sheriff

Sheriffs are elected and have law enforcement responsibilities in the county and manage the county jail. Only in Denver is the Sheriff appointed by the Mayor and only manages the county jail, court security, and transportation between the jail/detention center and court. Local communities decide how the the terms are for Sheriff and whether there are term limits.

State Court Judges

District and County Court Judges hear a wide variety of cases including civil, criminal, family, juvenile, probate, etc. In Colorado, there are twenty-two judicial districts. Each judicial district has a Judicial District Nominating Commission that puts together a list of potential judges. The Governor must appoint a judge from that list. They serve an initial two-year term and then stand for retention at the next general election. At a judicial retention election, voters from that judicial district vote to either keep a judge in office or remove a judge from office. If voters choose to keep the judge in office, he or she serves an additional term before standing for another retention vote. Judges can be removed from office by impeachment by the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the state Supreme Court. If a majority of voters vote to keep the judge, state court judges serve the following terms:

County Court judges – can serve four year terms in office. District Court judges - can serve six years terms in office Note: All Colorado State Judges must retire by the age of 72.

Municipal Court Judges

Municipal Court judge's responsibilities include hearing violations of city laws committed within the city limits, including traffic, lower-level crimes, and ordinance violations. Judges of the Colorado Municipal Courts are appointed to two-year terms by the governing body of their municipality (like City Council, for example).



Political Parties

This section describes the different political parties in Colorado. The information is from their official party websites.

Democrats

The Democratic Party is a political party in the United States with a broad platform of policies that seek to promote social justice, economic opportunity, and equal rights for all Americans. Its mission is to promote policies and values that support and empower individuals and communities, while ensuring that government is responsive to the needs and concerns of all citizens.

learn more about this party please visit https://coloradodems.org/

Republican

The Republican Party is a political party in the United States with a platform and mission that focus on promoting conservative values, free-market principles, and limited government. The party emphasizes individual freedom, personal responsibility, and traditional values. To learn more about this party please visit http:// www.cologop.org/

American Constitution Party

The mission of the Constitution Party is to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity through the election, at all levels of government and Constitution Party candidates who will uphold the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights. The goal is to limit the federal government to its delegated, enumerated, Constitutional functions. To learn more about this party please visit http://www.constitutionparty.com/

Approval Voting Party

Is an electoral system in which voters can select many candidates instead of selecting only one candidate. We believe that Approval Voting moves us beyond two-party thinking. You can show support for all the candidates you approve of. The candidates with the most votes win. To learn more about this party please email at info@ApprovalVotingParty.com

Green Party of Colorado

The party promotes green politics, specifically environmentalism, nonviolence, social justice, participatory democracy, grassroots democracy, anti-war, anti-racism, libertarian socialism, and ecosocialism. To learn more about this party please visit http://www.coloradogreenparty.org/

Libertarian Party

The Libertarian party is committed to Americas heritage of freedom: Individual liberty, and personal responsibility, a free market economy of abundance and prosperity, a foreign policy of non-intervention, peace, and free trade. To learn more about this party please visit http://lpcolorado.org/

No Labels Party

The No Labels party is a national movement of people who believe in America and in bringing our leaders together to solve our toughest problems. To learn more about this party please email at nick@nolabels.org

Unity Party of Colorado

founded on November 4, 2004, with the slogan "Not Right, Not Left, But Forward!" To learn more about this party please email at mail@unityparty.us

Colorado Center Party

The Center Party is dedicated to bringing civility back to politics, to bridge the divide between the extremes of the two major parties, to chart a course for government that represents the mainstream and center of public opinion, and to stop radical changes to our government, either from the left or right. To learn more about this party please visit https://coloradocenterparty.org

Information on how to find Voter Service Polling Center and Ballot Drop Off Locations

In this last section you can visit County Clerk & Recorders Elections Division Contact Information - DocsLib https://docslib.org/doc/4294837/county-clerk-recorders-elections-division-contact-information. There you can find your county election division locations where you can register and vote, and find locations for ballot drop offs.

Remember! Voting is a part of our everyday lives. Every opportunity to vote that there is, make sure to vote! Our voices have the power to achieve our needs and help bring about change.

Index:

To learn more about any of the information that was shared in this guide, please visit the websites below.

Mass Incarceration Trends - The Sentencing Project

For more Information on voting in a Primary Election in Colorado please visit: www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/FAQs/primaryElectionsFAQ.html

For more information on voting in a General Election in Colorado please visit; www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/FAQs/GeneralInfo-FAQ.html

To learn more about all the political parties in Colorado visit: www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Candidates/Political PartyDirectory.html

Recommended Books to Read!

Walk With Me by Fannie Lou Hamer When You Grow Up To Vote by Eleanor Roosevelt & Michelle Markel



YES! Count me in! I want to support CCJRC and help eliminate the overuse of the criminal justice sysem in Colorado.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution!

Your support makes all the difference!

NAME:	
ADDRESS	
CITY:STATE:ZIP	
EMAIL:	
Individual \$35 Low Income/senior \$15 Household \$50 Prisoner Free in 2021 Sustainer \$100 or more Freedom Fighter \$ charge me monthly/quarterly	
Credit Card #	
Exp date	

Please return to:

CCJRC 1212 Mariposa St. #6 Denver, CO. 80204