

Statement on the Passing of Representative Garnet F. Coleman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

9/24/2026

Media Contacts:

Joe Madden
713.443.9421
joe@jcmadden.com

Christopher Walker
512.993.7314
cwalk02@gmail.com

HOUSTON, TEXAS — The family of former state Representative Garnet F. Coleman is deeply saddened to announce that he passed away of natural causes on September 23. Details about services and arrangements will be announced in due time.

Coleman represented Houston's House District 147 from 1991 until his retirement in 2022. Across more than three decades in the Texas House, he worked to expand access to health care, strengthen mental health services, advance criminal justice reform and invest in the communities and institutions he served.

His legislative work helped establish Children's Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program in Texas and sustained their funding. As the Texas House's lead writer of the health and human services portion of the state budget during four legislative sessions, he secured major increases for health coverage, mental health care and HIV/AIDS services. He later helped develop the state's Medicaid 1115 Transformation Waiver, bringing substantial federal support to Texas health care providers. President Barack Obama selected him to serve in a working group of state legislators on health reform.

Coleman also passed Texas's mental health parity legislation, helped establish crisis intervention training for peace officers and passed the Sandra Bland Act. In Houston, he championed neighborhood development and advocated relentlessly for Texas Southern University, Prairie View A&M University and the University of Houston. He served as past chairman of the Texas Legislative Study Group House Caucus and the Texas Legislative Black Caucus. His work reflected a sustained commitment to people too often left without access to care or opportunity.

The family asks for privacy at this time and that he be remembered for his service, dedication to his family, and never-ending passion for uplifting all Texans.

Representative Garnet F. Coleman Career Highlights

- Served on the House-Senate Budget Conference Committee during the 74th (1995), 75th (1997), 76th (1999), and 77th (2001) Legislative sessions as the chief writer of Article II (Health and Human Services) for the Texas House. While the chief writer of Article II he increased funding for health coverage and all health and human services, including the largest increase in funding for mental health and HIV/AIDS.
- Created the state's children's Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) programs in 1999 (SB 445/HB1696) and shepherded funding for them through the Texas budget process. He continued to work on the programs by removing bureaucratic barriers via amendments to get hundreds of thousands of Texas children qualified for health care coverage.
- While on the Budget conference committee he directed over \$800 million to addressing health disparities and equitable access. He also created the Health Disparities Task Force in 2001, and worked on the multiple iterations of that task force including the creation of the DSHS Office of Health Equity Policy and Performance.
- Was instrumental in securing tens of billions of dollars in federal funding through the creation of the 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver in 2011 and its multiple extensions.
- Was selected by the Obama administration to be a member of President Obama's State Legislators for Health Reform, which was a working group of 32 state legislators who helped develop and pass the Affordable Care Act.
- Passed numerous bills to increase health awareness and education while serving on the House Committee on Public Health since 1993, including legislation to continue the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) in 2019, which he helped create in 2007.
- Passed legislation in 2007 to ensure that foster children enrolled in college would continue receiving state provided healthcare.
- Passed legislation in 2009 to allow rural hospitals to employ physicians (SB 1500).
- Passed the Mental Health Parity Bill in 1997 (HB 1173)
- Passed the Sandra Bland Act in 2017 (SB 1849/HB 2702), which ensures that all officers receive de-escalation training, requires robust and clear traffic stop data, provides a process for complaints on each traffic ticket and outside investigation of jail deaths, improvements to inmate safety in jails, and requires a good faith effort to divert people suffering from mental health conditions to treatment instead of jail.
- Passed Crisis Intervention Training for Peace Officers in 2005 (SB 1473/HB 2524)
- Passed several pieces of legislation that created and funded mental health training for school teachers, school staff, and university teachers and staff.
- Created the Greater Southeast Management District, Midtown Management District, Downtown Management District, East Downtown Management District, and passed additional legislation to spur economic development in Houston by creating other tax reinvestment zones throughout the city.
- Worked to ensure that Texas Southern University (TSU) remained strong and independent by preventing the school from being put under conservatorship during the 80th Legislative session in 2007. Additionally secured \$125 million in Office of Civil Rights Funds for TSU and Prairie View A&M University in 2001. Created the TSU Jordan-Leland School of Public Affairs and secured funding for its building and other TSU facilities.
- Worked to increase funding for the University of Houston (UH). Passed legislation to create the Hobby School of Public Affairs and the College of Medicine, and helped secure funding for their buildings and other facilities on the UH campuses. Also Joint-Authored HB 51 in 2009 that provided new funding that helped UH and other public Texas Universities become Tier 1 Universities.