

Charles Johnson

Freedom of Speech and Petition



The First Amendment states: “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Per the National Constitution Center, “The right to assemble has been a crucial legal and cultural protection of dissenting and unorthodox groups...suffragists, abolitionists, religious organizations, labor activists, and civil rights groups have all invoked the right to assemble in protest against prevailing norms.” Furthermore, “The right to petition...is among the oldest in our legal heritage, dating back to the Magna Carta...and plays an important role in American history. The Declaration of Independence justified the American Revolution by noting that King George III had repeatedly ignored petitions for redress of the colonists’ grievances.”

Charles Johnson, District 11 School Board Director, Term 2025-2029

Courtesy of Colorado Springs School District 11, 2025

The original United States Constitution did not protect the right to vote – instead leaving the matter up to the states. As a result, “For much of American history, this right has often been granted to some but denied to others.” Subsequently, the 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments sought to expand and protect voting rights. Recently, El Paso County Clerk and Recorder Steve Schleiker assured voters: “Colorado’s elections system is often recognized nationally because it balances two critical priorities: access and security. Here in El Paso County, that balance is supported by bipartisan processes, secure technology, transparent operations, and continuous improvement. Most importantly, voters should feel confident, not concerned, when they participate in an election.” In a representative democracy, citizens can hold elected officials accountable through peaceable assembly, petition, and at the ballot box. They can also run for office.

Born extremely premature and facing dire health impacts, Charles and Chauncy Johnson defied the odds. Raised in K-Land by great-grandparents Elonzo and Freddie Mae Baker, the twins have been deeply influenced by their great-grandfather’s work ethic, and great-grandmother’s community activism. In 2025, Charles was elected to the School District 11 Board of Education at age 25. As a D11 graduate, Charles ran a campaign focused on uplifting students, parents, and teachers – helping to inspire a new generation of leaders. After internships with State Representatives Tony Exum and Pete Lee, Chauncy served as a Senior Legislative Aide for State Senator Mark Snyder, before running for City Council, and later Colorado District #17. Despite unsuccessful results, Chauncy has galvanized the community through his grassroots campaigns, championing political participation among young people, bringing critical issues to the forefront, and “challenging the public’s perspective” about who can and should run for office. Now, what are you going to do?



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*Charles Johnson leading a
"Black Lives Matter" Protest
in Colorado Springs, 2020*

Photograph by Allison Daniel,
Stellar Propeller Studio



*Students gather in Acacia Park in
observance of Vietnam
Moratorium Day. One protest sign
"Stop the War". Identified on back
"speaker is either Scott Sunison or
David Dyer / Connie Congdon and
Dick Collier, anti-war activists /
Will Ketterson from KRDO / and
Stan Payne from the Gazette".*

October 15, 1969, Photograph by
Stan Payne, © Gazette. Courtesy of
The Gazette and Regional History
& Genealogy, Pikes Peak Library
District, (026-15).



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