

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 363

WHEREAS, Justice James H. Coleman, Jr. was born on May 4, 1933, in Lawrenceville, Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman experienced poverty early in life, as the son of a Black sharecropper and grandson of a slave in racially segregated Virginia during the Great Depression; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman began high school at Saint Paul's Polytechnic Institute, a historically Black college in Lawrenceville, because there was no local high school for Black students; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman enrolled at James S. Russell High School when it opened at the beginning of his junior year and graduated as class salutatorian in 1952; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman enrolled at Virginia State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and graduated cum laude in 1956; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman attended Howard University School of Law, from which he received his law degree in 1959; and

WHEREAS, through college and law school, Justice Coleman spent his summers working in New Jersey, where his brother had relocated; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from law school, Justice Coleman moved to New Jersey and was admitted to the bar in 1960; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, Justice Coleman began his legal career in private practice, with offices in Elizabeth and Roselle, New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman also served in the U.S. Army Reserve, being honorably discharged in 1962; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, Justice Coleman joined the New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry, serving as an assistant to the Commissioner, assistant to the director of the Division of Workers' Compensation, consultant to the New Jersey Rehabilitation Commission,

counsel for and manager of the New Jersey Subsequent Injury Fund, and referee of formal hearings in the Division of Workers' Compensation; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman became the first Black judge in the New Jersey Division of Workers' Compensation in 1964, and served in that role until 1973; and

WHEREAS, Governor William Cahill appointed Justice Coleman to serve as a Union County Court judge in 1973, and he served in that capacity until he became a Superior Court Judge in 1978; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman was elevated to serve on the Appellate Division of the Superior Court by Chief Justice Robert Wilentz in 1981, becoming the first Black judge to sit on New Jersey's intermediate appellate court; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman served in the Appellate Division until 1994, including as Presiding Judge from 1987 to 1994; and

WHEREAS, Governor Christine Whitman appointed Justice Coleman to serve as an Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court in 1994, and after confirmation by the Senate, Justice Coleman became the first Black Justice to serve on our State's highest court; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman was reappointed by Governor DiFrancesco in 2001 and re-confirmed by the Senate, and he served on the Supreme Court with distinction until his retirement in 2003, when he returned to the private practice of law; and

WHEREAS, over nearly four decades in the Judiciary, Justice Coleman wrote over 2,000 opinions, including decisions that helped to dismantle discrimination in the justice system by addressing cross-racial eyewitness identifications and the exclusion of prospective jurors based on race; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman's inspiring and historic judicial service made our State a fairer and more just place for all of our residents; and

WHEREAS, apart from his remarkable intellect and commitment to justice, Justice Coleman was beloved by his colleagues and a role model and mentor to many; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman was a loving husband to Sophia, his wife of more than six decades; father to his children, Kairon and James; and grandfather to his four grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman passed away on August 2, 2024 at the age of 91; and

WHEREAS, Justice Coleman will be missed by his family, friends, former colleagues, and all New Jerseyans; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to honor the life, legacy, and many accomplishments of Justice Coleman, and to mark his passing;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TAHESHA L. WAY, Acting Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. The flag of the United States of America and the flag of New Jersey shall be flown at half-staff at all State departments, offices, agencies, and instrumentalities during appropriate hours from Friday, August 23, 2024, through Sunday, August 25, 2024, in recognition and mourning of a trailblazing Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, Justice James H. Coleman, Jr.

2. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this
7th day of August,
Two Thousand and Twenty-Four,
and of the Independence of the
United States, the Two Hundred
and Forty-Ninth.

[seal]

/s/ Tahesha L. Way

Acting Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor