



**JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION**  
**Sworn Statement to be included in Transcript of Public Hearings**

**Circuit Court**  
**(New Candidate)**

Full Name: Isaac Louis Johnson, Jr.

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1. Why do you want to serve as a Circuit Court judge?

I have practiced law for 37 years and served as a municipal judge for 14 years. Throughout my legal career, I have appeared before many competent, and professional judges. Not only were those judges competent, each had a pleasant demeanor on the bench. I first began my career as a prosecutor appearing before Judge James Moore and Thomas Hughston. Both judges made you feel comfortable in their courtrooms. I've also appeared before other judges over the years that I respect, such as Thomas Ervin, Frank Eppes, C. Victor Pyle, William Traxler, and Billy Wilkins. These judges left an indelible impression on me, to the point that I vowed that if I ever became a judge, I would emulate them on the bench.

On my 14 years on the bench in Municipal Court, I have indeed emulated each of the above-mentioned judges. Each taught me how to be fair, impartial, compassionate, but most importantly, how to treat everyone in the courtroom. I always greet the parties and attorneys with a smile, whether it is the first case or the last case before me.

Being a judge is a gift from God, one that I do not take lightly. I wanted to be a judge from my early days as a prosecutor.

I also enjoy public service. I have served the state of South Carolina as a state prosecutor. I have served the United States as an Assistant United States Attorney. Further, I have served four municipalities as a municipal judge, currently serving as municipal judge in two municipalities. Additionally, I serve as an attorney in the

Social Security Administration and in the Office of Indigent Defense.

I have been blessed to serve as an attorney and judge for 37 years. I have the experience and training to enrich the judiciary of South Carolina in a manner beholden of such honor.

2. Do you plan to serve your full term if elected?

Yes

3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day?

No

4. Have you met the Constitutional requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice?

Yes

5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?

I am very reluctant to engage in communications with only one party. My philosophy is I don't engage in *ex parte* communications except when a party calls regarding a scheduling issue.

6. If you disclosed something that had the appearance of bias, but you believed it would not actually prejudice your impartiality, what deference would you give a party that requested your recusal? Would you grant such a motion?

I would certainly respect the party that requested my recusal and would consider very carefully whether my bias would even create the appearance of bias toward the moving party.

7. How would you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative?

I would reveal the appearance of impropriety, and I would not handle any matters in which my wife or close relative had a financial or social involvement.

8. What standards would you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality?

I would absolutely refrain from accepting any and all gifts or social hospitality.

9. How would you handle a situation in which you became aware of misconduct or appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or of a fellow judge?

I would inform the appropriate professional authority.

10. Are you a member of any organization or association that, by policy or practice, prohibits or limits its membership on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin? If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis.

No

11. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any political, social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe.

No

12. Do you have any business activities that you would envision remaining involved with if elected to the bench?

No

13. If elected, how would you handle the drafting of orders?

As a municipal judge, I ask the prevailing party to draft the order. I review the proposed order, and I also send a copy to opposing counsel. If there are no objections by opposing counsel, I sign the order and have it filed and sent to the parties.

14. If elected, what methods would you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

I would meet regularly with the staff. I would give lawyers certain deadlines for submission of motions, orders, etc., and I would have selected staff conduct follow-up. I would create a tickler system to ensure all staff members are aware of deadlines.

15. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy?

From the standpoint of my role as a judge, my job is to follow the law and rules based upon the law and precedent. The role of a judge is to follow the law, and not create public policy.

16. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. If elected, what activities do you plan to undertake to further this improvement of the legal system?

I would certainly speak at law related events such as continuing legal education seminars, and other events sponsored by a county bar association or law school.

17. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge would strain personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)? How would you address this?

I have been a judge for 14 years, and being a judge has never strained my personal relationships. When I was a prosecutor and prosecuted high profile criminal cases, I never allowed the pressure to affect my relationship with my family. As a Christian, I try and live by the mantra: faith, family, work.

18. The following list contains five categories of offenders that would perhaps regularly appear in your court. Discuss your philosophy on sentencing for these classes of offenders.
- a. Repeat offenders: Our legal system calls for consideration of offenders with prior convictions. My philosophy is to always consider an offender's criminal convictions, and his/her propensity to re-offend.
  - b. Juveniles (that have been waived to the Circuit Court): I have participated in the waiver of juveniles to Circuit Court. Our laws consider the age of an offender. My philosophy is all factors must be considered prior to sentencing, such as age, criminal history, type of offense, etc.
  - c. White collar criminals: I would not give any deference to a white collar offender. However, victims might be better served if restitution is a part of any sentence given to a white collar offender.
  - d. Defendants with a socially and/or economically disadvantaged background: It would depend on a myriad of factors. I would have to consider a number of factors before sentencing an offender under this category. However, impartiality and fairness would be my paramount concern. As a judge, I do not have any fast and hard rules that I follow in sentencing. I use my discretion based on many factors when sentencing an offender. I take a holistic approach to sentencing.
  - e. Elderly defendants or those with some infirmity: The age of an offender can certainly be considered, especially if he/she lived an exemplary life prior to appearing before me. Infirmity is a nebulous term; however, as a judge, I know that judges are sometimes challenged in sentencing those that suffer from mental infirmities. Our judiciary is certainly making inroads in including mental health treatment when sentencing the mentally infirmed.
19. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality?
- No
20. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a

*de minimis* financial interest in a party involved?

No

21. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period?

Yes

22. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply?

Address the issues and decide honestly, fairly, and impartially.

23. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, especially with a criminal defendant? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or pro se litigants?

No, absolutely not. As a judge, while I control my courtroom, I treat all persons and parties in my courtroom with respect. Being a judge is a gift from God, and I am always cognizant of how blessed I am to be on the bench, and not before the bench. Moreover, I represent the state of South Carolina.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS ARE TRUE AND COMPLETE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Sworn to before me this 7 day of July, 2023.

(Signature)

Deborah Vicaro

(Print Name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission Expires: 6-10-29

