



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

**Circuit Court  
(Incumbent)**

Full Name:  
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1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Circuit Court judge?

Since being sworn in as a Circuit Court judge for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, I have thoroughly enjoyed the judiciary. It has been an honor to serve so far, and I believe that I am giving back to our state. As a separate branch of our government, I believe it is vital that the judiciary work as efficient, fair, and just as possible so that the citizens can have full faith and confidence in its decisions. I would like to serve another term as a Circuit Court judge so that I may continue to serve the people of this state and do my best to make our judiciary as one of the best in the nation.

2. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-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 believe that *ex parte* communications degrade the trust in the judiciary and do not project fairness and predictability. I avoid these types of communications. However, under the Judicial Canon 3B, some *ex parte* communications are allowed in a limited and constrained way. This would include emergency issues regarding procedural matters and not substantive issues. The other party should be notified as soon as possible. However, these would be extremely rare exceptions.

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 believe that the appearance of bias and actual bias are synonymous. In my current position, I take judicial recusals extremely seriously. Recusals can delay and prolong cases, and can also hinder other judges from fulfilling their own duties as they fill in. However, if a party brings a substantive and good faith request for recusal, then based on case law and advice from other senior judges, I would absolutely recuse so as to avoid any appearance of bias. Again, as a judge I want to project fairness and predictability; bias and partiality work against those goals.

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

Because my wife and several family members are attorneys, any case involving them would immediately throw up a red flag and cause for recusal. Additionally, any case that a family member or myself had a financial stake, even the slightest, would also draw immediate recusal.

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

While the South Carolina Bar is small and many members are close friends, I am constantly aware of how gifts and social hospitality can quickly evolve to an appearance of bias. As a Circuit Court judge, I am always aware that I am not just a member of the South Carolina Bar when I am in public, but I am also seen as a neutral arbiter. And while many gestures of social hospitality are just that, gestures, a member of the judiciary must be continuously mindful of their position.

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 first seek advice from senior attorneys and judges whom I consider mentors. I would then contact the South Carolina Bar utilizing the resources and instructions that they provide.

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

No.

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

No.

12. How do you handle the drafting of orders?

I believe it is important that cases be moved competently and efficiently. With any court hearing requiring a written order, my goal is to make a preliminary decision on every motion before the end of the week. Once I make a decision, my law clerk contacts the attorneys to inform them of the decision and then ask for proposed orders. After receiving proposed orders, I review the proposals along with my law clerk's notes and my notes and then I write the order.

13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

One of the most important goals for me and my office is to always be timely and responsive to attorneys and litigants. In order to make sure that all of our deadlines are met and that we do not keep anything under advisement for an extended amount of time, our office utilizes technology and open communication strategies. For civil nonjury matters, a decision is made on each case as soon as possible. If for some reason I am undecided and it will take longer than the week-long term to make a decision, my office uses Microsoft Tasks to create a specific task of that motion. I will assign the task to my law clerk and put a "due date" so that I will follow up on the motion and make a decision. These tasks are shared with both my law clerk and administrative assistant. Our office also uses Microsoft Calendar. We share one calendar and it is accessible to our laptops and cellphones (IT has made this secure). This ensures that even if I am out of the office, or my staff is, that we are always reachable by attorneys and can confirm dates or other matters.

I continue to use "Inbox Zero" to try ensure that no emails or other tasks fall through the cracks. My law clerk and I meet regularly to confirm that there are no outstanding matters under advisement or other decisions that need to be made. Open communication between myself and staff is also helpful in making sure deadlines are met.

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

I do not believe that judges should engage in judicial activism and that it can be violation of separation of powers. I do not believe that judges should have a role in setting or promoting public policy. Setting public policy is the job of the legislature.

I believe that a judge's role is to handle the specific case or controversy that is in front of them. This is even more so on a trial judge's level. Every judge brings his or her own experiences and common sense to each case, and they should apply that in reaching a result. However, I believe it is critical that in order for our judicial system to be fair and predictable, judges follow precedent, statutes, and court rules.

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

I am a firm believer and practitioner of Judicial Canon 4. This Canon is so important because it encourages members of the judiciary to share their wealth of knowledge and experience with society so that we can improve our judicial system. I plan to continue to work with the South Carolina Bar to write and create CLEs.

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

There is no doubt that working in public service can cause a strain on personal relationships. Judges have to make tough decisions, and these decisions almost always have a losing side. The stress of decision making can negatively affect relationships with spouses and children. I believe the most important thing a judge can do is to find a mentor who has gone through the same situation. This means seeking out other judges who have dealt with these tough decisions and seek their guidance and advice.

17. 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:

Every case is unique, so I do not prejudge any case before I hear the specifics. With that being said, if a defendant is a repeat offender (particularly with violent crimes or the same crime being charged), then I believe that the law requires that the judge take a tough stance.

- b. Juveniles (that have been waived to the Circuit Court):

If a juvenile has been waived to Circuit Court, then it is likely that they have committed a serious offense. Taking into account the alleged crime and victim impact statement, I believe a judge should also factor in an offender's youthful age. The United States Supreme Court has spoken on this

issue in regards to life sentences for juveniles and described the difference between youth and adults.

c. White collar criminals:

Whether the crime is stolen money or physical violence, I believe a judge should follow the criminal statute in regards to how to treat these crimes.

d. Defendants with a socially and/or economically disadvantaged background:

To paint a picture of someone, a defendant will often give their background and family home life. I believe a judge should listen to and consider this when sentencing.

e. Elderly defendants or those with some infirmity:

As stated earlier above, I believe a judge should listen to and consider any mitigating circumstances presented by the defense when sentencing, that would include the age of the defendant as well as any infirmity.

18. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality?

No (see attached financial statement).

19. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved?

No. Even a *de minimis* interest would create the appearance of a conflict of interest.

20. 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.

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

Yes.

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

I believe that a judge should usually be stoic. Criminal cases and civil cases often present a wide range of emotions. However, the judge is always supposed to be neutral and fair. A laugh or a slight look of disgust can be misinterpreted by the parties and create distrust. Stoicism, seriousness, and maturity should always be the prevalent demeanor of a judge.

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 a pro se litigant?

A judge should never show anger in their courtroom. The judge is purposefully sitting above the litigants in order to show that they are neutral and detached. Anger can easily shift this perception and place the judge on one side or another. However, a judge should be firm if necessary.

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

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Sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My commission expires:\_\_\_\_\_