



**JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION  
PERSONAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE**

Court, Position, and Seat # for which you are applying:

1. Name: Mr.  
The Honorable Debra A. Matthews  
Ms.

Name that you are known by if different from above  
(Example: A Nickname):

Are you currently serving in some capacity as a judge? Yes  
If part-time, please note.  
(Includes Municipal, Magistrate, Etc.)

Home Address: [REDACTED]

Business Address: 115A S. Congress Street, Winnsboro, SC 29180

E-Mail Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: (home): [REDACTED]  
(office): (803) 712-6734  
(cell): [REDACTED]

2. Date of Birth: [REDACTED] 1957  
Place of Birth: Trenton, New Jersey  
Social Security Number: [REDACTED]

3. Are you a citizen of South Carolina? Yes  
Have you been a resident of this state for at least the immediate past five years? Yes

4. SCDL# or SCHD#: SCDL [REDACTED]  
Voter Registration Number: [REDACTED]

5. Have you served in the military? No If so, give the dates, branch of service, highest rank attained, serial number (if applicable), present status, and the character of your discharge or release. Please provide a copy of your DD214 concerning your discharge.

6. Family Status: In the space below, (a) state whether you are single, married, widowed, divorced, or separated; (b) if married, state the date of your marriage and your spouse's full name and occupation; (c) if you have ever been divorced or are in the process of obtaining a divorce, state the date, name of the moving party, court, and grounds; and (d) state the

names of your children and their ages. If your children are old enough to work, include the occupation of each child.

- (a) Family Status: Widowed;
- (b) Never divorced, two children;



- 7. List each college and law school you attended, including the dates of your attendance, the degrees you received, and if you left an institution without receiving a degree, the reason for your departure.
  - (a) Pan Am University (1985 part time);
  - (b) Ocean County College (1987-1990 transferred);
  - (c) Stockton State University (1991-1994) Bachelor of Arts Political Science;
  - (d) Widener School of Law (1995-1999) Juris Doctor.
  
- 8. List the significant activities in which you took part during your attendance at law school. Give the years you were involved in these activities and list any leadership positions you held.

I was a full time Wife and Mother during law school.
  
- 9. List the states in which you have been admitted to practice law and the year of each admission. Also list any states in which you took the bar exam but were never admitted to the practice of law. Please indicate the number of times you took the exam in each state.
  - (a) South Carolina, 2001, one time –admitted;
  - (b) NJ/PA, one time – not admitted.
  
- 10. Describe chronologically, since graduation from law school, your legal experience. Please include a list of all positions held in which you worked in a legal capacity. Describe the general character of your practice and divide it into periods with dates if its character has changed over the years. Please also describe the extent to which you were involved with the administrative and financial management of each of these entities, including management of trust accounts.
  - (a) Elected Family Court Judge, Sixth Judicial Circuit on February 7, 2018.
  - (b) I was self-employed operating a general practice from 2001 to 2018. I employed two associate attorneys. I immediately began practicing in the Family Court and the majority of my work was in Family Court. I handled most all types of Family Court cases including, divorces, custody, child support, adoptions, name changes, abuse and neglect, vulnerable adults and juveniles.
  - (c) I was a contract attorney with the South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense from 2013 to 2015.
  - (d) I served as a court appointed guardian ad litem on many occasions.
  - (e) I was certified as a Family Court and Circuit Court Mediator in 2010.
  - (f) In 2004, I began handling criminal cases, workers compensation, personal injury, social security disability and probate cases, as well as estate planning and real estate closings.

- (g) In 2002 I was admitted to the United States Bankruptcy Court and handled consumer filings for Chapter 7 and 13 clients.
- (h) I was admitted to the U.S. District Court, South Carolina 2001.
- (i) For most of my career I handled the administrative and financial management and trust accounts. I employed one bookkeeper to handle my financial affairs since 2001. My staff accepted payments and issued receipts to clients.

**Justices/judges applying for re-election to their current position may omit Questions 11–17. If you are a full-time judge seeking a judgeship different than your current position, Questions 11-17 should be answered based on your experience *prior to serving on the bench.***

11. Please answer the following:

- (a) If you are a candidate for Family Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience within each of the following Family Court practice areas: divorce and equitable division of property, child custody, adoption, abuse and neglect, and juvenile justice. Include information about cases you have handled in each of these practice areas, or if you have not practiced in an area, describe how your background and procedural knowledge has prepared you to preside over such matters as a Family Court Judge. Please also indicate the frequency of your appearances before a Family Court Judge within the past five years.
- (b) If you are a candidate for Circuit Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience in criminal matters, including any cases handled over the past five years and include a brief description of the issues involved. Further, please provide a brief written description of your experience in civil matters, including any cases handled over the past five years and include a brief description of the types of matters handled, issues involved, and procedural history. Please include information such as the primary areas in civil court in which you practice, whether you represent plaintiffs or defendants, or both. You may go back further than five years if you feel it would assist the Commission with its assessment of your experience. If you lack experience in an area, describe how your background and procedural knowledge has prepared you to preside over such matters as a Circuit Court Judge, or how you would compensate for your lack of experience in this area. Please also indicate the frequency of your appearances before a Circuit Court Judge within the past five years.
- (c) If you are a candidate for Master-In-Equity, please provide a brief written description of your experience in the Master's court, including any cases handled over the past five years and include a brief description of the issues involved. Please include the frequency of your appearances before a Master-In-Equity or a Circuit Court Judge within the past five years.

(d) If you are a candidate for Administrative Law Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience before an Administrative Law Judge, including any issues discussed and the frequency of your appearances before the Administrative Law or Circuit Court within the past five years.

12. What was the frequency of your court appearances during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench?

(a) federal:

(b) state:

13. What percentage of your practice involved civil, criminal, domestic, and other matters during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench?

(a) civil:

(b) criminal:

(c) domestic:

(d) other:

14. What percentage of your practice in trial court during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench involved matters that went to a jury, including those that settled prior to trial?

(a) jury:

(b) non-jury:

During the past five years, did you most often serve as sole counsel, chief counsel, or associate counsel?

15. List five of the most significant litigated matters you have personally handled in either trial or appellate court or before a state or federal agency. Give citations if the cases were reported and describe why these matters were significant.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

16. List up to five civil appeals you have personally handled. Give the case name, the court, the date of decision, and the citation if the case was reported.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

17. List up to five criminal appeals you have personally handled. Give the case name, the court, the date of decision and the citation if the case was reported.

(a)

- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (e)

18. Have you ever held judicial office? Yes. If so, list the periods of your service, the courts involved, and whether you were elected or appointed. Describe the jurisdiction of each of the courts and note any limitations on the jurisdiction of each court.

- (a) I was elected on February 7, 2018 to the Family Court, Sixth Judicial Circuit, Seat 2.
- (b) Family Courts have exclusive jurisdiction in domestic (marriage, divorce, adoption, legal separation, custody, visitation rights, termination of parental rights, adoption, support, alimony, division of marital property, name changes, birth certificate amendments, and restraints) and juvenile cases. The Family Court has exclusive jurisdiction over matters within the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act.
- (c) The Family Court must have jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter and does not have jurisdiction over non-marital assets.
- (d) Lack of subject matter can not be waived.
- (e) Family Court has concurrent jurisdiction with Probate Court of juveniles with mental health commitments or mentally retarded children. Paternity, common-law marriage, and interpretation of marital agreements are concurrent with Probate Court.
- (f) Family Court has concurrent jurisdiction with Magistrate and Municipal courts for violations by juveniles concerning traffic, fish, game and water.

19. If the answer to question 18 is yes, describe or list five of your most significant orders or opinions and give the citations if they were reported. Also list citations to any appellate review of these orders or opinions.

- (a) Boney v. Lamontagne, 2016-DR-29-703 – Lancaster;
- (b) Whitlock v. Walters et al., 2018-DR-29-249 – Lancaster;
- (c) South Carolina Dep't. of Soc. Servs. v. Phagan, Appellate Case No. 2018-001152;
- (d) Wickham v. Wickham, 2017-DR-20-182 – Fairfield;
- (e) Davis v. Hawkins, 2016-DR-32-2758 – Lexington.

20. List all courts in which you have been admitted to practice and list the dates of your admission. Give the same information for administrative bodies that require a special admission to practice.

- (a) South Carolina, 2001;
- (b) US District Court, District of SC, 2001;
- (c) US Bankruptcy Court, District of SC, 2002.

21. Have you taught law-related courses or lectured at bar association conferences, educational institutions, or continuing legal or judicial education programs? If so, briefly describe each course or lecture.

Yes, I lectured at the Family Court Bench Bar on December 7, 2018. My topic was problematic issues with temporary hearings.

22. Provide, as a separate attachment, your continuing legal or judicial education report from the past five years.
23. List all published books and articles you have written and give citations and the dates of publication for each.  
I have not written or published any books or articles
24. Please furnish as a separate attachment, two examples of legal articles, briefs, orders, or other legal writings for which you can claim sole or primary authorship. If you cannot claim sole authorship, please explain the extent to which you are the primary author, to include a description of the other authors and their contributions. The writing samples are for the Commission's use only and will not be published. (If you are a judge and are not seeking a different type of judgeship, this question is inapplicable.)  
(a) Whitlock v. Walters et al., 2018-DR-29-0249 (Order);  
(b) Boney v. Boney, 2016-DR-29-703 (Order);  
(c) Wickham v. Wickham, 2017-DR-20-182 (Memorandum for Order).
25. What is your rating or membership status, if any, by any legal rating organization, such as, Best Lawyers, Chambers, Legal 500, Martindale-Hubbell, Who's Who Legal, Super Lawyers, Million Dollar Advocates Forum, etc.? If you are currently a member of the judiciary, list your last available rating, if any.  
I am not rated.
26. List all bar associations and professional organizations of which you are a member and give the titles and dates of any offices you have held in such groups.  
(a) SC Bar Association;  
(b) Fairfield County Bar Association.
27. Have you ever held public office other than judicial office? No. If so, list the periods of your service, the office or offices involved, and whether you were elected or appointed. Also, state whether or not you have timely filed your report with the State Ethics Commission during the period you held public office. Yes. If not, were you ever subject to a penalty? If so, give details, including dates.
28. For sitting or former judges, list all employment you had while serving as a judge (whether full-time or part-time, contractual or at will, consulting or otherwise) other than elected judicial office. Specify your dates of employment, employer, major job responsibilities, and supervisor. None
29. Have you ever been an unsuccessful candidate for elective, judicial, or other public office? If so, give details, including dates.  
Yes, Fairfield County Magistrate, 2005 and Winnsboro Municipal Court, 2009.
30. Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law, teaching of law, or holding judicial or other public office? Yes. If so, give

details, including a description of your occupation, business, or profession, the dates of your employment, and the name of your business or employer.

- (a) Marketing – Spencer Gifts (1976);
- (b) Secretary – Electronic Data Systems (1978);
- (c) Marketing – Dolby Laboratories (1980);
- (d) Real Estate Agent (1985);
- (e) Residential Rental business – RDJ Properties (current);
- (f) Residential Builders business with deceased husband (no longer in business but I still hold a SC Residential Builder’s License).

31. Are you now an officer or director or involved in the management of any business enterprise? Explain the nature of the business, your duties, and the term of your service.  
Yes, Residential rentals, I prepare lease agreements, collect rents and file evictions.

32. Are you now or have you ever been employed as a “lobbyist,” as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(13), or have you acted in the capacity of a “lobbyist’s principal,” as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(14)? If so, give the dates of your employment or activity in such capacity and specify by whom you were directed or employed.  
No

33. Provide, **as a separate attachment**, a complete, current financial net worth statement that itemizes in detail:

- (a) the identity and value of all financial assets held, directly or indirectly, including, but not limited to, bank accounts, real estate, securities, trusts, investments, and other financial holdings; and
- (b) the identity and amount of each liability owed, directly or indirectly, which is in excess of \$1,000, including, but not limited to, debts, mortgages, loans, and other financial obligations.

(A net worth statement form is provided with this questionnaire and you must use this format for submission of your financial statement.)

**NOTE: The Commission may require written confirmation that financial obligations have been satisfied or that the parties have agreed upon a payment schedule.**

34. Has a tax lien or other collection procedure ever been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? No. Have you ever defaulted on a student loan? No. Have you ever filed for bankruptcy? No. If so, give details.

35. Since filing with the Commission your letter of intent to run for judicial office, have you accepted lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, money, or any other thing of value as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(1) from a lobbyist or lobbyist’s principal? If so, please specify the item or items you received, the date of receipt, and the lobbyist or lobbyist’s principal involved.  
No

36. Itemize (by amount, type, and date) all expenditures, other than those for travel and room and board, made by you, or on your behalf in furtherance of your candidacy for the position you seek. If you have spent over \$100, have you reported your expenditures to the House and Senate Ethics Committees?

Postage, paper, ink, envelopes - \$10.00.

37. List the recipient and amount of all contributions made by you, a member of your immediate family, or by a business with whom you are associated, to members of the General Assembly within the past four years.

(a) Luke Rankin \$250;

(b) Tommy Pope \$250;

(c) Mia McLeod \$250.

38. Have you or has anyone acting on your behalf solicited or collected funds to aid in the promotion of your candidacy? If so, please specify the amount, solicitor, donor, and date of the solicitation.

No

39. Describe any financial arrangements or business relationships you have, or have had in the past, that could constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position you seek or currently hold. Explain how you would resolve any potential conflict of interest.

I would have a conflict with previous or current tenants. I would recuse myself of any potential conflict of interest involving tenants.

40. Describe any interest you or a member of your immediate family has in real property:

(a) in which there is a potential conflict of interest with your involvement in a South Carolina state or local public agency;

(b) in which there have been public improvements of \$200 or more that adjoins property in which there have been public improvements of \$200 or more; or

(c) which was sold, leased, or rented to a state or local public agency in South Carolina.

None

List the interest you hold and the value and location of the property. Identify as applicable the:

(a) nature of any potential conflict of interest;

(b) nature and value of any public improvements; and

(c) South Carolina state or local public agency which purchased or is leasing or renting such property.

Attach a copy of any contract or agreement.

None

41. Identify any personal property interest you or a member of your immediate family sold, leased, or rented to a South Carolina state or local public agency. Identify the property, its amount or value, and the name of the agency. Attach a copy of any contract or agreement.

None



42. For sitting judges, if you currently hold an interest in stock or other securities or have held such an interest, list each stock you currently own or owned during the prior calendar year. If you prefer, you may attach broker or account records containing the requested information instead of listing it here.

None

43. For sitting judges, have you ever accepted anything of value from an attorney or litigant in a matter currently or previously before you or your court? If so, please give the details, including the name of the attorney or litigant and the thing of value you received.

No

44. For sitting judges, have you used the services of your staff, for which you did not pay, while campaigning for this office?

No

45. Have you ever been arrested, charged, or held by federal, state, or other law enforcement authorities for violation or for suspicion of violation of any federal law or regulation, state law or regulation, or county or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, or any other law, including another country's law? If so, give details but do not include traffic violations which are subject to a penalty of \$125 or less. You must include any and all arrests, including, but not limited to, offenses for driving under the influence or similar traffic offenses. Include all arrests that resulted in expungement, which will be redacted. If you have questions regarding whether to include an offense, please contact the Commission.

[All answers have been received and considered by the Commission, and as noted above, any expunged matters are redacted from the record.]

46. Have you, to your knowledge, ever been under federal, state, or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute? If yes, explain.

No

47. Have you ever been sued by a client? Have you ever been a named party (personally or professionally) in or had a pecuniary interest in any civil or criminal proceedings? If so, give details, including, but not limited to, dates, and resolutions.

No, I have never been sued by a client. I was a Plaintiff in a case against Chief of Police and TruVista in 2005, settled. I have filed a few evictions for renters. I have not been a named party or had a pecuniary interest in any civil or criminal proceedings since the filing of my last application.

48. If you are in private practice, are you covered by malpractice insurance and, if so, how long have you carried malpractice insurance? If applicable, have you ever been covered by a tail policy? If so, please explain when you were covered by a tail policy. Also, if applicable, indicate your coverage and deductible for your current malpractice policy.

N/A

49. Have you ever, in South Carolina or any other jurisdiction, as a lawyer, judge, or other professional, been sanctioned or disciplined for lawyer, judicial, or other professional misconduct or has any jurisdiction found that you committed any misconduct? If so, give the details and describe any final disposition. Include any and all confidential and public sanction, discipline, or finding of misconduct of any kind.

[Yes and no responses are redacted for all candidates unless there is a public discipline.]

50. Have you ever been investigated by the Department of Social Services? If so, give the details and the resolution. Has your name ever been enrolled on the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect? If so, give the details.  
No to both questions.

**Note: The flash drive with your application materials contains (1) Section 2-19-70(c); (2) JMSC Rule 24, (3) Memo of Guidance, and (4) informal opinions and letters concerning pledging prohibitions, with which third parties acting on your behalf, as well as you, must comply.**

51. Have you directly or indirectly requested the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened or have you been offered a conditional pledge of support by any legislator pending the outcome of your screening? Have you received the assurance of any public official or public employee that they will seek the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened? If so, give details.

No

52. Have you requested any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf before the final and formal screening report has been released?

No

Describe the campaigning you have done for this election and include a list of those individuals you have asked to campaign on your behalf and, to the best of your knowledge, those who have campaigned for you on their own initiative.

None

53. Are you familiar with the 48-hour rule, which prohibits a candidate from seeking pledges until after the draft report becomes final, which occurs on the day and time specified on the Commission's published screening schedule?

Yes

54. Since submitting your letter of intent to become a candidate, have you or has anyone acting on your behalf contacted any member of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission about your candidacy or intention to become a candidate? If so, give details.

No

55. List the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of five (5) persons from whom you are providing references. Also, provide the Commission with **original letters** of

recommendation from each person listed herein, including their signature (preferably in blue ink). **The Commission will not accept a photocopy or electronic submission of a letter of recommendation and failure to include all five (5) original letters of recommendation in your packet when you submit it will render your packet incomplete.** Please **do not** have references mail your reference letters to the Commission directly. *You must return the five (5) original letters of recommendation to the Commission with your application packet.*

- (a) Susan D. Taylor, Vice President, South State Bank, [REDACTED]
- (b) Brad Douglas, Major, Fairfield County Sheriff's Dept., [REDACTED]
- (c) Carol A. Tolen, Esq., [REDACTED]
- (d) Glenn Bowens, Esq., [REDACTED]
- (e) Betty A. Gutschlag, Friend, [REDACTED]

56. Are you active on or a member of a social media or Internet site or have you, to your knowledge, been featured or depicted on a social media or Internet site, such as, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.? If so, how would your use of social media or other similar types of Internet sites be affected if you were serving in a judicial capacity?  
No

57. List all civic, charitable, educational, social, and fraternal organizations of which you are or have been a member during the past five years and include any offices held in such a group, any professional honors, awards, or other forms of recognition received and not listed elsewhere.

- (a) Finance Committee – St. Theresa Church;
- (b) Secretary – Mid County Water Board;
- (c) Coach and Judge Volunteer Mock Trial;
- (d) Sixth Judicial Circuit Public Defender Board;
- (e) Sixth Judicial Circuit Public Defender Selection Panel.

58. Provide any other information that may reflect positively or negatively on your candidacy, or which you believe should be disclosed in connection with consideration of you for nomination for the position you seek. This information may include how your life experiences have affected or influenced the kind or type of judge you have been or plan to be. I believe in honesty, hard work and integrity, as well as treating everyone with dignity and respect. I work hard and try to maintain the upmost respect for everyone in the court room, but at the same time I am firm. I believe my experience as a Family Court lawyer has helped me tremendously as a Family Court Judge.

YOUR SIGNATURE WILL BE HELD TO CONSTITUTE A WAIVER OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF ANY PROCEEDING BEFORE A GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE OR ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUR CREDIT.

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Notary Printed Name)  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_\_