



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

Circuit Court
(New Candidate)

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

I desire to serve as a Circuit Court judge because I fundamentally believe that "he that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." I desire to serve as a Circuit Court judge because the courtroom must be the one place on earth where the playing field is fair, level, and just. A place where each person, no matter their walk of life, is treated equally, fairly and with respect and dignity. Lady Justice is blind, and no respecter of persons, our judges should embody this vision.

I am a servant, with a servant's heart. A person who genuinely desires to see our world made better through the principles of law and order. Yet law and order, without tempering them with mercy, are just the bludgeoning tools of the powerful to reign down its desires upon the weak.

Since I was a child, I have been in love with justice. One of my childhood friends once told me I was always the "conscience" of our group of friends. In my heart, I am a person of justice and yet, alongside that justice, I am a woman of mercy. I have given my legal career to serving the people of the State of South Carolina by advocating for justice, while tempering it with mercy. It is my sincerest desire to continue to pursue justice alongside mercy on a broader scale as a Circuit Court judge.

My desire to serve as a Circuit Court judge is not about self, nor have I come to this process because I think I am somehow "worthy." My desire to serve as a Circuit Court judge is about continued service and sacrifice to the people of the State of South Carolina. When properly administered by the "just," the legal system works for us all. If elected to serve as a Circuit Court judge, this is the kind of judge I will be.

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?

The Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 3B(7)(a) governs my philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications. In a nutshell, I will not engage in *ex parte* communications with any individual involved in a matter pending before the Court, other than in the limited instances laid out in Judicial Canon 3B(7)(a)-(e), where such communications are permitted.

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?

The Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 3E is instructive. I would give great deference to the party requesting recusal and grant the party's motion. To maintain the fairness and impartiality of the judiciary, I would recuse myself. The integrity and dignity of the judiciary far exceeds one's own desire to govern. Such integrity and fairness must be maintained at the highest levels possible.

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 disclose any and all financial or social involvement on the part of my spouse or close relative to the parties involved in the litigation and to any others who might become party to the litigation. I believe in transparency. In addition, depending upon the level of financial or social involvement, I would readily recuse myself from the pending litigation and all matters associated with it, with or without a request from the involved parties.

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

I would adhere to the standard set forth in Judicial Canon 4D(5) of the

Code of Judicial Conduct. While there are circumstances when a judge or his family can accept gifts, I would tend to err on the side of caution in all situations. I will only accept gifts of nominal value from close friends and family. Pursuant to Canon 4D(5)(c), ordinary social hospitality is acceptable but I would still be mindful of when, where and with whom I socialized so as to avoid the look of impropriety or bias or the perception thereof.

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?

Pursuant to the Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 3D, I would take the appropriate action, which could include direct communication with the judge or lawyer, and up to reporting the violation to the appropriate authority or other agency.

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.

Yes. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated. This organization is a Greek/Panhellenic Sorority whose membership is limited to college educated women or those who identify as women. This organization does not discriminate on any other basis. My status in this organization is inactive and has been inactive since about 1998.

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

I have in the past given money to such organizations, including my church. I have not recently participated in any fund-raising activities. Nor have I sought funds from other sources for these organizations or entities.

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?

I would tend towards having the lawyers involved in the litigation draft the orders. To ensure accuracy, I would have the prevailing attorney draft the order and then have opposing counsel review the order prior to submitting it to me for final review and signature. I could also foresee having my Law Clerk draft the orders with my assistance and oversight. There are also times when the most appropriate action would be for me to draft the orders myself. I have seen it done each of these ways, and as such, could employ each option.

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

I would work closely with my staff to ensure that deadlines are met. I would make use of the court dockets available to me and implement a tracking system for outstanding orders from the cases before me. I would also employ the use of paper and electronic calendar resources. Additionally, I would give attorneys deadlines to turn in orders that take into consideration the deadlines imposed upon me by Court Administration. I would expect to have periodic meetings with staff in order to meet deadlines as well. I would also have status conferences with the parties to ensure that cases are in a posture to move forward at the appropriate times.

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

There are three branches of government – Executive, Judicial and Legislative. The role of the judicial branch is to interpret and enforce the laws of our state as set forth by the Legislature. As such, there is no place for "judicial activism." Promoting public policy is a right given to the people who elect their Legislators. The public – meaning the people - should set the policy by which they intend to be governed.

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?

As an attorney, I have always tried to actively promote the improvement of the legal system. I have done so by allowing various students to job shadow me in both the office as well as during court. I have also participated in various school Career Day activities and tried to mentor young people who expressed a desire to attend law school.

Additionally, when called upon to serve in the role of lecturing on the law, I have always readily agreed to do so. If elected, I would like to continue promoting the legal system in this way. I would also be willing to present at CLE programs and to serve in any other capacity as requested by the Supreme Court. I could also foresee speaking to various groups regarding the legal system and administration of justice with the proscriptions and constraints of Judicial Canon 4 ever in mind.

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 do not believe it would strain my personal relationships. My family and close friends are aware of the restrictions imposed upon me now as a member of the Bar and more specifically as a prosecutor. If elected to serve, I would further advise my family and friends of the limitations imposed upon me by my obligations to the judiciary, and would expect them to respect any and all boundaries.

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:

I would adhere to the law when sentencing these individuals. As a Career Criminal Prosecutor for the past ten (10) years, I have had the opportunity to see many repeat offenders, many of whom I have had to prosecute. While prosecuting these individuals, I also at times was able to catch a glimpse of what made them into the career felons they had become. I do not believe there is a one-size fits all philosophy as it relates to career offenders. I believe each case should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Certain violent crimes are more corrosive to the fabric of society than others. Repeat offenders cannot all be lumped into one bucket. As such, my philosophy regarding these individuals would differ depending on the crime presented.

My philosophy for sentencing would take into account, the Victim's Bill of Rights and victim impact statements from victims or family members of victims. I would also hear mitigation from the Defendant and any who wished to speak on his/her behalf. An additional factor to consider will be any statements made by the Defendant and any expressions of remorse or the lack thereof. I would also consider the impact the crime has on society and the pursuit of justice, while tempering this with mercy. If possible, I would look at possible pre-sentencing investigations, which are employed

oftentimes in Federal Court through the Department of Probation and Parole. In every case, I would hear from the Crime victims or family of the crime victim, State of South Carolina, Defense mitigation, and or members of the community who wished to speak on behalf of either side.

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

Sentencing should be commensurate with the crime committed and its impact upon society, and yet sentencing must also consider the potential for rehabilitation of the defendant and the purpose served by the sentence.

One of the roles of the criminal justice system is rehabilitation and discouraging recidivism. It has always been my belief that juveniles or young defendants are some of the most amenable individuals to rehabilitation. As such, much care and thought would be given in sentencing these persons. Though I tend to disagree with a blanket philosophy of waiving up every juvenile eligible to be waived under Section 63-19-1210 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, (1976) as Amended, another Court will have already made the decision to waive this person to the Circuit Court. Thus, I would adhere to the law when sentencing these individuals.

I would take particular care when dealing with a juvenile offender waived up as an adult. In sentencing this particular defendant, I would take into consideration the nature and circumstances of the charges, any victim statements, and any juvenile convictions, if available. Defense mitigation, and any statements from the Defendant would also be factors to consider in sentencing. An additional factor to consider will be any statements of remorse or the lack thereof of the Defendant (during a guilty plea). Additionally, the age and experience(s) of the defendant would be considered in mitigation. I could also foresee engaging the Department of Probation and Parole to conduct a pre-sentence investigation into such a defendant's background.

In addition, I would likely consider the potential for sentencing under the Youthful Offender Act when dealing with a juvenile waived to the Circuit Court.

c. White collar criminals:

I would adhere to the law when sentencing these individuals and take into account, the Victim's Bill of Rights, and victim impact statements, if applicable, as well as prior conviction(s) of the Defendant. I would also consider and listen to anyone wishing to speak on behalf of the defendant. Defense mitigation, and any

statements from the Defendant, including any expressions of remorse or the lack thereof (during a guilty plea), would also be factors to consider in sentencing.

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

I would adhere to the law when sentencing these individuals. I would also consider, the Victim's Bill of Rights, and victim impact statements (where applicable), as well as prior conviction(s) of the Defendant. Defense mitigation and statements from anyone wishing to speak on behalf of the defendant would be also be considered. An additional factor to consider will be any statements made by the Defendant and any expressions of remorse or the lack thereof. The defendant's socially or economically disadvantaged background could also be considered as mitigating factors in sentencing. As to any possible restitution ordered, the socioeconomic status of the defendant would also be useful in determining a defendant's ability to repay restitution.

e. Elderly defendants or those with some infirmity:

I would adhere to the law when sentencing these individuals and take into account, the Victim's Bill of Rights, and victim impact statements, as well as prior conviction(s) of the Defendant. Defense mitigation and anyone wishing to speak on behalf of the defendant would also be factors to consider. Finally, age and infirmity would certainly be factors to take into consideration in mitigation when sentencing the elderly or infirm defendant. Elderly and or infirm persons are particularly vulnerable inmates in the prison population, as such, I would certainly take these vulnerabilities into account during sentencing. Sentencing should be commensurate with the crime committed and its impact upon society, and yet sentencing must also consider the potential for rehabilitation of the defendant and the purpose served by the sentence.

Finally, as it relates to each of these offenders, each will be treated equally, fairly, with dignity and respect, and with a mind towards the fair administration of justice for all.

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?

Pursuant to the Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 3B(4), "a judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity." I believe this is the appropriate demeanor for a judge; yet, I also subscribe to the belief that we should treat others the way we would want to be treated. This quality of character applies at all times, and not just when the judge is acting in an official capacity. Moreover, I believe a judge is a servant of the people and should thus exemplify a servant's heart rather than that of an overlord or tyrant. I believe a judge should daily walk with the epitome of grace and humility.

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?

I believe Judicial Canon 3B speaks to this issue. As previously stated above, "a judge shall be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom the judge deals in an official capacity." Anger is not an appropriate emotion when dealing with members of the public, criminal defendants, attorneys or pro se litigants. I believe it demeans the prestige of the office to express anger when acting in the official capacity of the judiciary.

Anger is never an appropriate response for a judge in dealing with those before him in an official capacity. I believe we are all subject to anger; however, I subscribe to the belief that we can be angry, yet not allow this corrosive emotion to make us react to the source of the anger. This means regardless of the behavior of the individual, be it, member of the public, attorney, or defendant, a judge must hold themselves to the highest standards possible. Should someone "make" the judge angry – and no one should ever hold so

much power over you – as to “make” you angry – the judge as the arbiter of justice, and holding the most power in the courtroom – must step back from such emotion and rule only on the basis of the law and the most persuasive of arguments. Such emotion left unchecked, can have a deleterious effect on the pursuit of justice.

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 ____ day of _____, 2020.

(Signature)

(Print Name)
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission Expires: _____

