



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

**Master-in-Equity  
(Incumbent)**

Full Name: The Honorable Joseph King Coffey

Business Address: 2 North Brooks Street, Manning, SC 29102

Business Telephone: 803-435-8847

1. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-appointed? Yes
2. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day? Yes. The population of Clarendon County is low enough so that the Master in Equity is permitted to maintain practicing.
3. Have you met the statutory requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice? Yes
4. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated? As a general rule, I don't favor *ex parte* communications. There would be limited circumstances where they may be permitted and in no way should related to a suit's merits.
5. 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? If something warranted disclosure and a party requested recusal it would likely be granted.
6. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality? Our firm, with others in the area exchange holiday gifts. I would continue this tradition and not accept anything beyond the scope of typical giving which has been established.
7. How would you handle a situation in which you became aware of misconduct or appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or of a judge? I would inform the aggrieved the appropriate course of action thereafter would be to file a complaint against the individual.

8. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any political, social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe. I have participated in fundraising activities with my church and the Citadel.
9. How do you handle the drafting of orders? In the majority of circumstances, the prevailing attorney would be requested to draft an Order for review and provided it is suitable, adopted.
10. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines? The assistant employed by the County would primarily be tasked with observing deadlines under the direction and supervision of the Master in Equity.
11. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy? I would not engage in judicial activism and feel judges should have at most a limited role in it if they feel compelled.
12. 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 would seek to maintain the highest integrity of this office by requiring respect of the rules and other parties in all matters before me.
13. 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? It would not strain personal relationships.
14. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality? No.
15. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved? I would not hear such a case.
16. 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 these bases. No.

17. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period?  
Yes.
18. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply? I feel a judge should be detached yet respectful of the parties, evaluate carefully the facts and applicable law relevant to a matter and ensure the parties understand the basis of decisions rendered.
19. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public who would appear before you? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant? I don't feel anger would ever be an appropriate emotion to be displayed by a judge. Circumstances would dictate firmness be shown when a party is not demonstrating appropriate decorum.

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

Joseph K. Coffey

Sworn to before me this 18<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2021.

Monica S. Bruce  
(Signature)

MONICA S. BRUCE  
(Print Name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: 1/11/2029

