



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

Supreme Court/Court of Appeals
(New Candidate)

Full Name: Harris Bruce Williams

Business Address: 1220 Senate Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Business Telephone: 803.734.2159

1. Do you plan to serve your full term if elected? Yes
2. If elected, do you have any plans to return to private practice one day? No
3. Have you met the Constitutional 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?

My usual practice is not to engage in *ex parte* communications. The rules do; however, allow certain relief to be sought by *ex parte* petition, and some administrative matters regarding a case may necessitate some *ex parte* contact.

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 I thought it was serious enough to disclose initially, then I would give great deference to the parties. I want all parties to believe they are receiving a fair and impartial hearing.

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

I do not accept gifts from lawyers or parties who appear before me. I do accept some social hospitality as allowed by the Canons of Ethics, including attendance at bar meetings and social events sponsored by local and state bar associations.

7. 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 have to report it.

8. Are you affiliated with any political parties, boards or commissions? If so, in what capacity are you serving? No

9. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any political, social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe. No

10. How would you prepare for cases that were before you?

First, I review the record and briefs filed with the court. After the applicable case law is reviewed, I discuss the matter with my clerks in preparation for discussion with fellow judges on the panel. A pre-hearing report is prepared for the panel conference. The case may be discussed with the judges on the panel. If the case is scheduled for oral argument, I listen carefully to the arguments of the lawyers. Then, I utilize all the information presented and knowledge gained in the process to make my decision.

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

Public policy is determined by the General Assembly. The role of the judge is to review the law and apply the law to the facts of the case. Judicial activism raises serious separation of powers concerns because it necessarily involves the judiciary infringing upon the power of the people, or another coequal branch of government, to make an important policy decision.

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

I will continue to speak at CLE seminars sponsored by the South Carolina Bar. I have served on a Legislative Study Committee and would continue to serve if appointed to other committees. In addition, I would continue giving presentations to community groups about the legal system. For the past twenty-four years, I have been involved in drug courts and encouraged their development. I hope to continue my involvement in educating the public about drug courts, as well as

assisting in the training of those involved in establishing new drug courts. I will work with the judges of the Court of Appeals and the SC Bar for the benefit of the citizens of South Carolina.

13. 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 plan to address this?

I have a very supportive family who has experienced my serving as a Family Court Judge for nine years and as a Court of Appeals Judge for seventeen years. My wife and children have been able to appropriately handle any issues or difficult circumstances from my serving as a judge.

14. Please describe your methods of analysis in matters of South Carolina's Constitution and its interpretation by explaining your approach in the following areas. Which area should be given the greatest weight?

- a) The use and value of historical evidence in practical application of the Constitution:
- b) The use and value of an agency's interpretation of the Constitution:
- c) The use and value of documents produced contemporaneously to the Constitution, such as the minutes of the convention:

The primary rule of statutory construction is to ascertain and effectuate the intent of the legislature. Constitutional construction is preferred over some unconstitutional interpretation. Terms that are clear and unambiguous should be given their plain and ordinary meaning without efforts to limit or expand their meaning.

To assist in the construction, it would be helpful to review documents and records produced contemporaneously in an effort to determine legislative intent. Historical evidence would be useful and should be considered.

In matters relating to the South Carolina Constitution, clear statutory language, evidence of legislative intent, long standing administrative interpretations, and required constitutional construction are all factors to be weighed.

15. 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? No. If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis.

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

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

A judge must demonstrate patience and the ability to listen. This applies to trial and appellate judges.

18. Would there be a role for sternness or anger in meetings with attorneys?

I have found that treating attorneys and litigants with respect is the most appropriate way to conduct the business of the court.

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 _____, 2021.

(Signature)

(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission Expires: _____