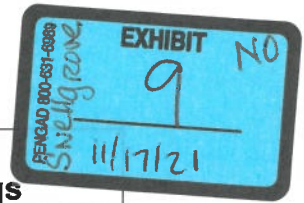


JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION
Sworn Statement to be included in Transcript of Public Hearings



Family Court
(Incumbent)

Full Name: Vicki J. Snelgrove

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1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court judge?
I continue to find this job fulfilling. Furthermore, I continue to desire to assist people in one of the most difficult times in their lives whether it is a divorce, custody disagreement, facing an abuse or neglect allegation or a child charged with a crime

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 statutory requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice? Yes

5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? I do not engage in any *ex parte* communications that are not in writing. That way the record is clear upon what I relied in issuing or refusing to issue an *ex parte* order. Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?
Any time a Judge signs an Order and Rule to Show Cause requiring someone to appear at a hearing regarding an allegation of contempt, that is an *ex parte* communication and Order. The circumstances under which other *ex parte* orders are issued should be based on exigent circumstances- for DSS when an affidavit has been filed showing a *prima facie* case of abuse or neglect- a child cannot be found and needs to be picked up to secure his/her safety; a child is alleged to have violated a DJJ placement and cannot be located; we issue a pickup order to secure that child and his/her safety. I have signed *ex parte* orders upon a showing that there is a valid reason to think a parent is planning to leave the country with a child. In those circumstances, I will sign an order

prohibiting all parties from removing the child from the jurisdiction of a Family Court in South Carolina. I will sign an order upon a valid showing that a party to the action is disposing of assets to avoid them being in the subject to equitable division- that order would prohibit all parties from disposing of, destroying or compromising the integrity of marital assets. Whenever I sign such an order, I also set a hearing to be held within five (5) days to minimize any unfair disadvantage it could cause a party.

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. I would listen to the reason for the recusal request and if it did not persuade me, I would deny the recusa I f it did not persuade me, I would deny the recusal? My method is as follows:

If I see that I could possibly have a conflict, I disclose that on the record with the parties present. I then assign an attorney to be the point person. I tell the parties that I will leave the courtroom. If any party objects to me hearing the case, I ask the point person to tell me that there is an objection, but NOT to disclose the person wanting me to recuse myself. Would you grant such a motion? Yes, I have in fact granted those motions.

7. How do you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative? If a close friend or relative is in front of me, I recuse myself on my own. The only time I would not is if all parties request that I hear the case- an uncontested adoption (I have heard at least one of these involving a person with whom I go to church.)

When I first began my job as a Judge, there were rare times that I had to hear a probable cause hearing where the attorney for DSS was a former law partner and good friend. She would put the relationship on the record. If I am the only Judge holding court in Aiken, and no other Judge is presiding, I would hold the hearing, rule on the issue and allow the Defendants to request a *de novo* probable cause hearing once he/she had counsel.

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

I socialize with family members and former law partners who are all attorneys. They do not appear in front of me. These are the only persons that practice law that I socialize with except at SC Bar conventions and SCAJ conventions.

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?
 1. I would talk with that Judge to see what issues he/she may be going through that may explain such conduct.
 2. If no change, I would talk with colleagues to see if any others have noticed the behavior.
 3. Ultimately, I would contact Judicial Conduct.

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

11. Do you have any business activities that you have remained involved with since your election to the bench? I still own a 1/6 interest in the office building used by my former law firm. In only receive rent.

12. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how do you handle the drafting of orders? For most temporary hearings, I rule from the bench; make clear notes of my rulings; assign an attorney to draft the order; require that the order be presented to the opposing side before submission to me; we have a form that attorneys are to use to verify that was done.
For trials- I send written order instructions to all sides (through the attorneys) outlining my ruling and the findings I want included in the Order. Again, the attorney drafting the order is instructed to provide verification that the order was approved by opposing counsel prior to submitting to me for signature.

13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines? have "tickle" dates on calendars; we keep all emails that have date deadlines. My staff emails attorneys when orders are close to late; if no response, she calls the attorney; if no satisfactory response, I send the attorney an email. I have had to do that less than ten (10) times in eleven (11) years.

What specific actions or steps do you take to ensure that the guidelines of the guardian ad litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case?

14. I read the report thoroughly; allow for cross-examination. If there is a motion regarding removal of a GAL, I question the GAL and the movant carefully to see what the allegation of wrongdoing or bias is, and whether or not it is legitimate. I look at the report to see if the GAL has spent an inordinate amount of time with one party over the other or with one party's witnesses more than the other.

15. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy? If by "judicial activism", one means to advance a political agenda, I see no reason for that, especially in Family Court. I follow the court rules, state statutes and case law in running my court and rendering decisions.

16. 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 speak at seminars, serve on committees and speak at schools on the value on an independent judiciary.

17. 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? This job can be emotionally exhausting and taxing. I make every effort not to bring it home, but am not always successful. My spouse has a very clear understanding of this and provides support for me. There are times, I just go home and find alone time. Fortunately, many of my close friends are family members who are also attorneys. They also have a clear understanding of the stress of this job.

18. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality? No

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

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

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? Open-mindedness; patience with firmness; critical thinking; ability to control a courtroom without being dictatorial or rude.
23. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, especially with a criminal defendant? Not anger, but being firm and showing who is in charge of that courtroom. Certainly not with a juvenile criminal defendant. Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant? Again, not anger, but being able to let the attorney or party know who is in charge of the courtroom. If an attorney misquotes the law (and it is apparent that it has been done intentionally), I do correct that attorney on the record in front of his/her attorney; when an attorney has been warned of uncivil behavior and has repeatedly been non-compliant, there may be a private warning discussion advising that attorney that I will not tolerate that behavior.

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: _____