



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

**Family Court**  
**(Incumbent)**

Full Name: The Honorable Gwendlyne Young Jones

Business Address: Post Office Box 192  
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Business Telephone: (803) 576-1760

1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court judge?

I want to serve another term as a Family Court judge because I feel that there is still much work to be done. Each year that I have served, I have gained more knowledge to effectively preside over the important cases of the families that come before me. It is imperative that the judicial system continues to have judges with the compassion and temperament that I possess in presiding over cases in such an emotionally-charged atmosphere. Family court is an arena where it is imperative that the judge is attentive, knowledgeable and patient. I strive to make sure that all of the litigants that come before me leave feeling that I considered all of the facts, giving them ample time to express their views, treating them all fairly.

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? I am uncertain if I will return to private practice upon my retirement.
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? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?

I feel that it is inappropriate to allow any attorneys or self-represented litigants to discuss the facts of a case before me outside the presence of

the other party. Ex parte communications are unacceptable and undermine the integrity and honor of our judicial system. This type of communication erodes the faith of the community that they will receive a fair disposition in our legal system. However, I feel that ex parte communications are permitted in a few instances such as an attorney may file an ex parte affidavit to obtain an emergency hearing when there is an imminent threat of harm to someone. In addition, there are occasions when ex parte orders are reviewed and granted in custody matters by the Department of Social Services for immediate removal of a child or vulnerable adult that is in imminent danger. Depending upon the facts of the case, the supporting affidavit may result in an order granting an emergency hearing to be held the next day.

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?

I feel that the mere appearance of impropriety is sufficient to consider a recusal. I would want to hear all of the facts surrounding the request, and if the appearance alone is there, I would grant the motion for recusal.

7. How do you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative?

I have never had a matter of this type come before me; however, if it was brought to my attention, I would disclose the financial or social involvement of my spouse or close relative, and recuse myself from hearing the matter. I am of the firm belief that if the mere appearance of impropriety exists, recusal is appropriate.

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

First, I would evaluate who the gifts or social hospitality is coming from. I do not accept gifts or social hospitality from persons that may appear before me. I am careful to avoid any perception of bias, bringing distrust to the judicial system. I understood when I took the oath of office that I was accepting restrictions on my conduct at all times. However, if an event is taking place that all members are invited, I might elect to attend. I do not feel that gifts and social hospitality should be avoided from friends that do not come before me.

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?

If I became aware of misconduct or the appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or of a fellow judge, I would first make sure that I have all of the facts. If necessary, I would have a hearing and go on the record regarding the situation concerning a lawyer. If appropriate, I would refer the situation to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel to conduct an investigation regarding the questionable actions of the lawyer or fellow judge.

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

No.

11. Do you have any business activities that you have remained involved with since your election to the bench?

Yes. I enjoy event-planning and floral designing when my schedule permits.

12. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how do you handle the drafting of orders?

I take notes during all the matters that come before me. If there are attorneys involved in the case, I may instruct one of the lawyers to submit a proposed order, or draft the order myself. I personally do all of the order in the self-represented cases.

13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

We send out reminders to the attorneys when there are outstanding orders. If the orders are not submitted in a timely fashion, their names are entered on the matters under advisement report that is submitted to the Supreme Court monthly.

14. 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?

It is important to ensure that the guardian has complied with the guardian ad litem statute. Specifically, it is crucial that the guardian timely submits interim and final written reports. The reports are vitally important to the case, and prevent any unnecessary delay in hearing the matter. The guardian ad litem has an important neutral role to provide information that is vital in assisting the court with rendering its decision. If a case is scheduled before me and the report is not in the file, a request for immediate compliance and explanation is required. I also make sure that the information has been shared with counsel and self-represented litigants. Oftentimes, if the parties have the report in advance, a settlement of the case can be reached.

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

I have taken an oath to appropriately apply the law as written, not make laws. To do otherwise, negates the confidence the community has in our legal system. My job is to administer the law, based upon the individual facts of the case before me. In a situation where there is no law on the issue, I have a duty to research and make sure that my ruling conforms to the public policy of our State as evidenced in other forums or cases.

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?

When possible, I plan to continue to speak and lecture at continuing legal education seminars, schools and other forums when requested. In addition, I am willing to serve on any committee that seeks to improve the legal system.

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?

I do feel that the pressure of serving as a judge could strain personal relationships. However, if it is explained to friends and family that I am perceived as a judge at all times; misunderstandings can be avoided. I understand that we are not expected to live in seclusion; however a judge does not hold the position only when sitting on the bench. I am expected

to be cognizant of my position at all times, avoiding any appearance of impropriety and upholding the integrity of the profession.

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?

I would not hear a case where I or a member of my family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved. The mere appearance of impropriety should be avoided at all times.

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? If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis.

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?

A judge's demeanor should be courteous, impartial and patient at all times. However, it is important to maintain control of the courtroom, making sure that the attorneys are compliant with the civility oath. Those persons choosing to represent themselves are held to the same standard. It is important to show compassion, respect and empathy for the parties.

An appropriate demeanor applies at all times, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, not just when on the bench.

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 a pro se litigant?

A display of anger is never appropriate under any circumstances toward anyone. I realize that emotions may be high, however, it is important for a judge to calmly, yet firmly control the courtroom, treating everyone with respect and compassion.

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

*Lance Lyne of Jones*

Sworn to before me this 19 day of July, 2021.

*Linda S. Taylor*

(Signature)

Linda S. Taylor

(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: July 25, 2027