



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

Family Court
(Incumbent)

Full Name: The Honorable Usha J. Bridges

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1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court judge? I came on the bench with the mindset that I can make a difference. Having served since 2010, I know that I can and do make a difference in the lives of many. I enjoy my job and I would love to continue in my capacity as a judge any my quest to do the right thing in the lives of many, especially children.

2. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-elected? I do plan to serve full term if re-elected.

3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day? I have no plans to return to private practice.

4. Have you met the statutory requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice? I am currently 60 years of old, a life-long residence of Cherokee County, South Carolina and practiced law for seventeen years before being appointed to my first term. Yes, I meet the statutory requirements for this position.

5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated? Ex-parte communication should not be engaged. The only time it should be engaged is under the exception defined in guidelines of Canon 3B(7)(a) which allows the facilitation of scheduling and other administrative purposes and to accommodate emergencies. Canon3B(7)(b) which allows advise oral or written from disinterested expert on the law providing the parties involved are informed or seeking advice and opportunity to respond to oral or written communications.

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 have no problem recusing myself. If I feel the request was being made to undermine due process; I would also address that issue.
7. How do you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative? I would disclose the involvement and recuse myself due to the fact of reasonably questionable association.
8. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality? Being on the Family Court bench for some time now, I understand the importance of myself and family not accepting gifts or social hospitality because it might be construed as debt obligation to the giver.
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? The misconduct has to be disclosed and the Office of Disciplinary Counsel will be contacted about the situation.
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? No
12. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how do you handle the drafting of orders? I issue instructions, instruct one attorney to draft the order and require the other attorney to review and approve before it is submitted to me for my signature.
13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines? I have a secretary who places everything on our office calendars. She additionally keeps up with outstanding orders and calls each attorney to remind them of the order's status.

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? I always communicate the required expectations of compliance of judicial responsibilities with an emphasis on confidentiality, diligence, bias, and prejudice in performance of their official duties. I recommend the Guardian ad Litem issue written reports to ensure proper performance of their duties relating to the facts of each case.
15. What is your philosophy on “judicial activism,” and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy? I do not think that judges have a role in setting or promoting public policy. Our job is to ensure that the rules and statues which are enacted are followed. We cannot and should not interject our personal bias.
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? Since becoming a judge, I have had the opportunity of speaking at different churches and schools. I have also been privileged to serve on various committees. I plan to continue on the various committees and I look forward to speaking to children and also members of the community about what the Court system is about and how it works properly.
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 not feel my personal relationships are strained as a result of me being a Judge.
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 a member of my family held *de minimis* financial interest to avoid appearance of impropriety.

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? The demeanor of a Judge is significant in establishing a climate of respect, trust and fairness. I believe a judge should possess the specific characteristics such as trustworthy, confidence, courteous, patience, reliable, punctual and even tempered.

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? As we are all human and may get angry, emotional behavior is not consistent with responsibility to perform impartially and fairly. It is imperative to have a self awareness of internal emotions in order not to react to situations from a personal emotional bias be it a member of the public or attorney.

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: _____