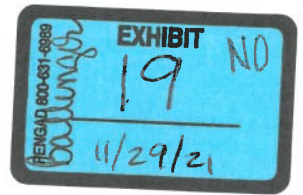


JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION
PERSONAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE
2021



Court, Position, and Seat # for which you are applying: Family Court
Tenth Judicial Circuit
Seat 2

1. Name: The Honorable Karen F. Ballenger

Name that you are known by if different from above
(Example: A Nickname): N/A

Are you currently serving in some capacity as a judge? If part-time, please note.
(Includes Municipal, Magistrate, Etc.)

Family Court Judge

Home Address: [REDACTED]

Business Address: PO Box 487 (mailing address)
205 West Main Street (physical address)
Walhalla, South Carolina 29691

E-Mail Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: (home):
(office): (864) 638-4290
(cell): [REDACTED]

2. Date of Birth: [REDACTED] 1957
Place of Birth: Mullins, South Carolina
Social Security Number: [REDACTED]

3. Are you a citizen of South Carolina? Yes
Have you been a resident of this state for at least the immediate past five years? Yes

4. SCDL# or SCHD#: SCDL# [REDACTED]
Voter Registration Number: [REDACTED]

5. Have you served in the military? No
If so, give the dates, branch of service, highest rank attained, serial number (if applicable), present status, and the character of your discharge or release. Please provide a copy of your DD214 concerning your discharge.

6. Family Status:
- (a) State whether you are single, married, widowed, divorced, or separated.
 - (b) If married, state the date of your marriage and your spouse's full name and occupation.
 - (c) If widowed, list the name(s) of spouse(s).
 - (d) If you have ever been divorced or are in the process of obtaining a divorce, state the date, name of the moving party, court, and grounds.
 - (e) State the names of your children and their ages. If your children are old enough to work, include the occupation of each child.

Family Status: Divorced

Divorced in 1981 (to the best of my recollection) in the Dominican Republic. Approximately one year later, I became concerned about the validity of the divorce. So, I filed a divorce action in Horry County, SC. Divorced on March 20, 1982, Horry Co., S.C. Family Court, I was the moving party (name at the time: Karen F. Mincey), One Year's Continuous Separation.

Divorced on April 1, 2011, Anderson Co., S.C. Family Court, I was the moving party (Karen F. Ballenger), One Year's Continuous Separation.

One Child



7. List each college and law school you attended, including the dates of your attendance, the degrees you received, and if you left an institution without receiving a degree, the reason for your departure.

(a) College: University of South Carolina
 Dates of Attendance: Summer 1975 to August 1978
 Degree: Bachelor of Science , Major: Computer Science

(b) Law School: University of South Carolina School of Law
 Date of Attendance: 1984 to 1987
 Degree: Juris Doctor

8. List the significant activities in which you took part during your attendance at law school. Give the years you were involved in these activities and list any leadership positions you held.

None

9. List the states in which you have been admitted to practice law and the year of each admission. Also list any states in which you took the bar exam but were never admitted to the practice of law. Please indicate the number of times you took the exam in each state.

South Carolina. I was admitted to practice in this state on November 24, 1987. I only took the bar exam one time.

10. Describe chronologically, since graduation from law school, your legal experience. Please include a list of all positions held in which you worked in a legal capacity. Describe the general character of your practice and divide it into periods with dates if its character changed over the years. Please also describe the extent to which you were involved with the administrative and financial management of each of these entities, including management of trust accounts.

(a) Kennedy, Price & Dial, Columbia, South Carolina, Associate, 1987 until June, 1988. My duties included research and drafting of pleadings and other legal documents; assisting in trial preparation, maintaining client contact; and a limited amount of real estate work. As an associate, I was not involved with administrative and financial management of the firm.

(b) Judicial Law Clerk, June 1988 to January 1990

The Honorable Carol Connor, Resident Circuit Judge for the Fifth Judicial Circuit. Judge Connor had recently been elected as circuit court judge, and she needed a law clerk of the summer. As Judge Connor's law clerk, my duties included overseeing the docket, performing legal research, reviewing orders, and order preparation.

The Honorable Marion H. Kinon. After clerking for Judge Connor, Judge Marion Kinon asked me to serve as his law clerk for approximately 6 weeks while his law clerk was in training with the South Carolina National Guard.

The Honorable William Howard Ballenger. In October of 1988, the Honorable William Howard Ballenger, Resident Circuit Court Judge for the Tenth Judicial Circuit, offered me a position as his law clerk. During my time as Judge Ballenger's law clerk, he presiding over two death penalty cases. I was employed as Judge Ballenger's law clerk until January 1990.

(c) Ross, Stoudemire & Awde, P.A., Seneca, South Carolina, Associate, 1990. In July of 1992, I became a named partner in the firm – Ross, Stoudemire, Ballenger & Sprouse, P.A. I was with this firm until December 31, 1994. During this time, I had a general practice which included domestic; civil litigation; criminal (very limited); workers compensation and social security. I would estimate that approximately 60% of my practice during this time was domestic. I had very limited involvement with the administrative management of the firm. I had no involvement with the financial management of the firm.

- (d) After leaving the above firm, I began a solo practice in Walhalla, South Carolina. Very shortly thereafter, I became a principal/partner in the firm of Ballenger, Fedder, Cain & Norton, L.L.P. I was with this firm until June of 1998. My practice during this time included domestic; personal injury; workers' compensation; probate; social security; civil and a very limited amount of real estate. I handled all of the administrative and financial responsibilities for my portion of the practice.
- (e) From June of 1998 to 2001 (to the best of my recollection), I had an office in Walhalla, South Carolina. During this time, I had a general practice. However, the main focus of my practice was family court matters. As a solo practitioner, I had to handle all of the financial responsibilities of my practice.
- (f) In 2001, I began practicing with the firm of Fedder, Norton, Ballenger and Enderlin, P.A. The area of my practice did not change. The majority of my practice was appearing in family court and handling domestic issues. Subsequently, Derek Enderlin left the firm and accepted a job with the Public Defender's office, and Julie Mahon became a member of the firm. The firm's name changed to Norton, Ballenger and Mahon, P.A. on April 23, 2004 based on the records of the Secretary of State. Subsequently, Julie Mahon married and moved from Oconee County, South Carolina. Bradley Norton and I continued to practice in Walhalla, South Carolina. Then on or about July 11, 2011, Keith Denny became a named partner in the firm. The name of the firm was changed to Norton, Ballenger and Denny, P.A. During all of this time, the attorneys kept our finances separate (other than the joint financial responsibilities). Therefore, I was responsible for all of the financial responsibilities of my practice.
- (g) On May 23, 2012, I had the honor of being elected as Family Court Judge for the Tenth Judicial Circuit. I have served in this position since that date.

Justices/judges applying for re-election to their current position may omit Questions 11-17. If you are a full-time judge seeking a judgeship different than your current position, Questions 11-17 should be answered based on your experience prior to serving on the bench.

11. Please answer the following:

- (a) If you are a candidate for Family Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience within each of the following Family Court practice areas: divorce and equitable division of property, child custody, adoption, abuse and neglect, and juvenile justice. Include information about cases you have handled in each of these practice areas, or if you have not practiced in an area, describe how your background and procedural knowledge has prepared you to preside over such matters as a Family Court judge. Please also indicate the frequency of your appearances before a Family Court judge within the past five years.

- (b) If you are a candidate for Circuit Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience in criminal matters, including any cases handled over the past five years, and include a brief description of the issues involved. Further, please provide a brief written description of your experience in civil matters, including any cases handled over the past five years, and include a brief description of the types of matters handled, issues involved, and procedural history. Please include information such as the primary areas in civil court in which you practice, and whether you represent plaintiffs or defendants, or both. You may go back further than five years if you feel it would assist the Commission with its assessment of your experience. If you lack experience in an area, describe how your background and procedural knowledge has prepared you to preside over such matters as a Circuit Court judge, or how you would compensate for your lack of experience in this area. Please also indicate the frequency of your appearances before a Circuit Court judge within the past five years.
 - (c) If you are a candidate for Master-In-Equity, please provide a brief written description of your experience in the Master's court, including any cases handled over the past five years, and include a brief description of the issues involved. Please include the frequency of your appearances before a Master-In-Equity or a Circuit Court judge within the past five years.
 - (d) If you are a candidate for Administrative Law Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience before an Administrative Law Judge, including any issues discussed and the frequency of your appearances before the Administrative Law or Circuit Court within the past five years.
12. What was the frequency of your court appearances during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench?
- (a) federal:
 - (b) state:
13. What percentage of your practice involved civil, criminal, domestic, and other matters during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench?
- (a) civil:
 - (b) criminal:
 - (c) domestic:
 - (d) other:
14. What percentage of your practice in trial court during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench involved matters that went to a jury, including those that settled prior to trial?
- (a) jury:
 - (b) non-jury:

During the past five years, did you most often serve as sole counsel, chief counsel, or co-counsel?

15. List five of the most significant litigated matters you have personally handled in either trial or appellate court, or before a state or federal agency. Give citations if the cases were reported and describe why these matters were significant.
- (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)
 - (e)
16. List up to five civil appeals you have personally handled. Give the case name, the court, the date of decision, and the citation if the case was reported.
- (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)
 - (e)
17. List up to five criminal appeals you have personally handled. Give the case name, the court, the date of decision and the citation if the case was reported.
- (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)
 - (e)
18. Have you ever held judicial office? If so, list the periods of your service, the courts involved, and whether you were elected or appointed. Describe the jurisdiction of each of the courts and note any limitations on the jurisdiction of each court.

Family Court, Tenth Judicial Circuit, Seat 2
Date of Election: May 23, 2012
Dates of Service: July 16, 2012 to the present
Jurisdiction: Family Court

19. If the answer to question 18 is yes, describe or list five of your most significant orders or opinions and give the citations if they were reported. Also, list citations to any appellate review of these orders or opinions.
- (a) South Carolina vs. Michelle G and Robert Dale L, Anderson County. Issues: Termination of Parental Rights. This case is significant for me because it was the first case that I heard that was decided on appeal, and I was affirmed. South Carolina Department of Social Service v. Michelle G and Robert L, 407 S.C. 499, 757 S.E.2d 388 (2014).

- (b) Melissa Caldwell Cromer vs. Aubrey Gene Cromer, Brian Cromer and Kevin Cromer, Anderson case, Issues: Divorce, Alimony, Equitable Division of Property and Attorney Fees. It was a seven day trial. The Wife appealed my decision. Based on the Remittitur dated July 31, 2019, the appeal was dismissed (Appellate Case No. 2019-000899).
- (c) South Carolina Department of Social Services vs. Rosalinda Obregon-Mejia and Miguel Diaz-Duran vs. Dulce Navarrete and Jane Doe and John Doe, Anderson, Issues: Termination of Parental Right. It was a five day hearing. This case was heard in the summer of 2017 before the use of WebEx and remote technology. The Defendants were incarcerated in a federal detention facility (in two different facilities in two different states). The Court had appointed the Defendant parents attorneys and Guardians. The parents could not speak the English language. The Defendant parents participated and attended the hearing telephonically with the assistance of the interpreter. There were two parties who intervened. There were eight attorneys involved in the case. The logistics of having a hearing with two non-English parties participating telephonically was very challenging. Defendant Rosalinda Obregon-Mejia appealed my decision. I was affirmed in an unpublished opinion. South Carolina Department of Social Services vs. Rosalinda Obregon-Mejia, Miguel Diza-Duran, et.al., Opinion No. 2018-UP-460 (S.C. Ct. App. Filed December 6, 2018). Defendant Miguel Diaz Duran also appealed my decision. I was affirmed in an unpublished opinion – South Carolina Department of Social Services vs. Rosalinda Obregon-Mejia, Miguel Diza-Duran, et.al., Opinion No. 2018-UP-459 (S.C. Ct. App. Filed December 6, 2018).
- (d) South Carolina Department of Social Services vs. Rebecca Johnson, Dustin Trotter, Billy Miller and Joshua Jackson; South Carolina Department of Social Services vs. Dustin Trotter and Rebecca Johnson; Sharmon Rivera vs. SCDSS, Dustin Trotter, Rebecca Johnson and Billy Miller; and Benjamin Philip Hardy and Lauren Alice Hardy vs. Rebecca Johnson, Dustin Trotter and SCDSS, Oconee County, Issues: Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption. Four cases were consolidated for the sole purpose of trial. Nine attorneys were involved. It was a six day trial.
- (e) Gregory Scott Merritt vs. Melissa Pearce Merritt, Anderson County, Issues: Custody and child related issues, Nine day trial.

20. List all courts in which you have been admitted to practice and list the dates of your admission. Give the same information for administrative bodies that require a special admission to practice.

- (a) South Carolina, 1987. My name at the time of my admission was Karen Paige Fowler.
- (b) U.S. District Court for the District of SC, 1992.

21. Have you taught law-related courses or lectured at bar association conferences, educational institutions, or continuing legal or judicial education programs? If so, briefly describe each course or lecture.
- (a) I was an instructor in domestic law at Columbia Junior College in the paralegal program in the summer of 1988.
 - (b) I was a presenter at a conference held at the Sheraton in Columbia, South Carolina. The subject matter of the conference was legal issues relating to child abuse and neglect. The audience was lay guardians, Department of Social Service workers, and attorneys. To the best of my knowledge, the seminar was sponsored by the South Carolina Children's Law Center. I have not been able to locate any information as to the date of the course.
 - (c) Since becoming a judge, I speak on family court issues at the annual Oconee County Bar meeting every year.
22. Provide, as a separate attachment, your continuing legal or judicial education report from the past five years. See attached.
23. List all published books and articles you have written and give citations and the dates of publication for each. None
24. Please furnish as a separate attachment, two examples of legal articles, briefs, orders, or other legal writings for which you can claim sole or primary authorship. If you cannot claim sole authorship, please explain the extent to which you are the primary author, to include a description of the other authors and their contributions. The writing samples are for the Commission's use only and will not be published. (If you are a judge and are not seeking a different type of judgeship, this question is inapplicable.)
25. What is your rating or membership status, if any, by any legal rating organization; such as, Best Lawyers, Chambers, Legal 500, Martindale-Hubbell, Who's Who Legal, Super Lawyers, Million Dollar Advocates Forum, etc.? If you are currently a member of the judiciary, list your last available rating, if any.
- BV Distinguished rating, Martindale-Hubbell
26. List all bar associations and professional organizations of which you are a member and give the titles and dates of any offices you have held in such groups.
- (a) South Carolina Bar Association
 - (b) Oconee County Bar Association, President in 1996
 - (c) South Carolina Conference of Family Court Judges

27. Have you ever held public office other than judicial office? If so, list the periods of your service, the office or offices involved, and whether you were elected or appointed. Also, state whether or not you have timely filed your report with the State Ethics Commission during the period you held public office. If not, were you ever subject to a penalty? If so, give details, including dates.

No

28. For sitting or former judges, list all employment you had while serving as a judge (whether full-time or part-time, contractual or at will, consulting or otherwise) other than elected judicial office. Specify your dates of employment, employer, major job responsibilities, and supervisor.

None

29. Have you ever been an unsuccessful candidate for elective, judicial, or other public office? If so, give details, including dates.

In 1999, I submitted an application for the Judge of the Family Court for the Tenth Judicial Circuit, Seat 2. I was found to be qualified for the position. I withdrew my application by letter dated January 21, 2001. The Honorable Timothy M. Cain was elected to the judicial office where he served admirably until he was elected to the federal bench.

30. Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law, teaching of law, or holding judicial or other public office? If so, give details, including a description of your occupation, business, or profession, the dates of your employment, and the name of your business or employer.

When I was a teenager and during my college years, I worked for my father in his business, Mullins Department Store. I would estimate that I started working for my father when I was 16 years of age and worked for him until November 1978.

Soon after graduating college, I became employed by Davis National Bank in Mullins, South Carolina. I worked at Davis National Bank from November 1978 until July 1984. The positions that I held at the bank were Teller, Data Processing Manager, Internal Auditor, Training Coordinator and Marketing Specialist.

31. Are you now an officer or director or involved in the management of any business enterprise? Explain the nature of the business, your duties, and the term of your service.

No

32. Are you now or have you ever been employed as a “lobbyist,” as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(13), or have you acted in the capacity of a “lobbyist’s principal,” as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(14)? If so, give the dates of your employment or activity in such capacity and specify by whom you were directed or employed.

No

33. Provide, **as a separate attachment**, a complete, current financial net worth statement that itemizes in detail:
- (a) the identity and value of all financial assets held, directly or indirectly, including, but not limited to, bank accounts, real estate, securities, trusts, investments, and other financial holdings; and
 - (b) the identity and amount of each liability owed, directly or indirectly, which is in excess of \$1,000, including, but not limited to, debts, mortgages, loans, and other financial obligations.

(A net worth statement form is provided with this questionnaire and you must use this format for submission of your financial statement.)

NOTE: The Commission may require written confirmation that financial obligations have been satisfied or that the parties have agreed upon a payment schedule.

34. Has a tax lien or other collection procedure ever been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? Have you ever defaulted on a student loan? Have you ever filed for bankruptcy? If so, give details. Also, proof of satisfaction of any liens or defaults must be submitted with your application package.

A tax lien in the amount of \$604.71 was filed against me on October 17, 2011. After correspondence with the South Carolina Tax Commission, the tax lien was cancelled of record, and I was refunded \$645.19 due to over payment. I then wrote the South Carolina Tax Commission. After reviewing my letter, the South Carolina Tax Commission expunged the lien with the Oconee County Register of Deeds. Therefore, that lien is no longer “of record”.

35. Since filing with the Commission your letter of intent to run for judicial office, have you accepted lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, money, or any other thing of value as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(1) from a lobbyist or lobbyist’s principal? If so, please specify the item or items you received, the date of receipt, and the lobbyist or lobbyist’s principal involved.

No

36. Itemize (by amount, type, and date) all expenditures, other than those for travel and room and board, made by you, or on your behalf in furtherance of your candidacy for the position you seek. If you have spent over \$100, have you reported your expenditures to the House and Senate Ethics Committees?

None

37. List the recipient and amount of all contributions made by you, a member of your immediate family, or by a business with whom you are associated, to members of the General Assembly within the past four years.

None

38. Have you or has anyone acting on your behalf solicited or collected funds to aid in the promotion of your candidacy? If so, please specify the amount, solicitor, donor, and date of the solicitation.

No

39. Describe any financial arrangements or business relationships you have, or have had in the past, that could constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position you seek or currently hold. Explain how you would resolve any potential conflict of interest.

None

40. Describe any interest you or a member of your immediate family has in real property:
- (a) in which there is a potential conflict of interest with your involvement in a South Carolina state or local public agency;
 - (b) in which there have been public improvements of \$200 or more that adjoins property in which there have been public improvements of \$200 or more; or
 - (c) which was sold, leased, or rented to a state or local public agency in South Carolina.

List the interest you hold and the value and location of the property. Identify as applicable the:

- (a) nature of any potential conflict of interest;
- (b) nature and value of any public improvements; and
- (c) South Carolina state or local public agency which purchased or is leasing or renting such property.

Attach a copy of any contract or agreement.

In the past, my daughter rented a building in Walhalla, SC for use by the Guardian ad Litem program. In September of 2019, my daughter sold the building.

41. Identify any personal property interest you or a member of your immediate family sold, leased, or rented to a South Carolina state or local public agency. Identify the property, its amount or value, and the name of the agency. Attach a copy of any contract or agreement.

None

42. For sitting judges, if you currently hold an interest in stock or other securities or have held such an interest, list each stock you currently own or owned during the prior calendar year.

If you prefer, you may attach broker or account records containing the requested information instead of listing it here.

Attached is my statement from Smith Barney.

43. For sitting judges, have you ever accepted anything of value from an attorney or litigant in a matter currently or previously before you or your court? If so, please give the details, including the name of the attorney or litigant and the thing of value you received.

No

44. For sitting judges, have you used the services of your staff, for which you did not pay, while campaigning for this office?

No

45. Have you ever been arrested, charged, or held by federal, state, or other law enforcement authorities for violation or for suspicion of violation of any federal law or regulation, state law or regulation, or county or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, or any other law, including another country's law? If so, give details but do not include traffic violations subject to a penalty of \$125 or less. You must include any and all arrests, including, but not limited to, offenses for driving under the influence or similar traffic offenses. Include all arrests that resulted in expungement, which will be redacted. If you have questions regarding whether to include an offense, please contact the Commission.

[All answers have been received and considered by the Commission, and as noted above, any expunged matters are redacted from the record.]

46. Have you, to your knowledge, ever been under federal, state, or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute? If yes, explain.

No

47. Have you ever been sued by a client? Have you ever been a named party (personally or professionally) in or had a pecuniary interest in any civil or criminal proceedings? If so, give details, including, but not limited to, dates, and resolutions.

It is my recollection that I was named as a party in an action involving real estate which I owned in Marion County, South Carolina. It is my understanding that the Defendants in the case were my mother, my brother and me. However, I have searched the South Carolina judicial website and my father is the only person listed as a defendant in the case.

Case No. 1993-CP-37-00125: This is an action which I filed against my daughter and her father in order to be named as custodian over an investment account with Smith Barney. At the time of my father's death, he had an investment account with Smith Barney. On the account, he was listed as the custodian under the Uniform Gift to Minor's Act for my

daughter, Courtney Lenore Ballenger. I filed this action seeking to be named successor custodian on these accounts. The Court granted the relief, and I was named as successor custodian for Courtney Lenore Ballenger on said accounts.

Case No. 2003-CP-37-649: This action was filed against me on June 23, 2003 alleging that I had missed the statute of limitations in a personal injury case. I turned the matter over to my malpractice carrier. I denied any liability in the case. The case was dismissed by Order of the Court on August 25, 2003.

Case No. 2010-CP-37-1061: This is a foreclosure action. I was named as a Defendant in this suit due to unpaid guardian ad litem fees by one of the Defendants. In Case No. 2003-DR-37-71, I was awarded \$400.00 as guardian fees. Based on the court records, the case was dismissed per Rule 41(a) of the Rules of Civil Procedure.

Case No. 2011-CP-37-499 and Case No. 2012-CP-37-136 (same parties as Case No. 2010-DR-37-1061): Both of these action involve the same parties and deal with the same issue. The actions are foreclosure actions. I was named as a Defendant in these actions due to unpaid guardian ad litem fees. I filed an Answer in the 2011 case. Subsequently, I executed a Disclaimer of Interest in which I disclaimed any interest in the subject property of the foreclosure action due to the award relating to my guardian fees. The 2011 action was dismissed by Order dated May 21, 2012. On February 9, 2012, another foreclosure action was filed. Upon being served in the 2012 foreclosure action, I made contact with the Plaintiff's attorney and advised them that I had executed a disclaimer of my interest. I was dismissed as a party in the 2012 foreclosure action by Order of the Court dated March 9, 2012.

Case No. 2016-CP-37-382- I initiated a foreclosure action (as Short Street Holdings, LLC) against Bradley Norton and United States of America. I had to name United States of America as a party because Bradley Norton had a federal tax lien. The building was my former office building. The property was foreclosed. After the foreclosure action, Short Street Holdings, LLC sold the property.

Eminent Domain issue – Central Electric (Blue Ridge Electric) contacted me in the last several months regarding a potential eminent domain issue. Central Electric sent an offer to “take” property in order to put a power line on the property where my daughter has a remainder interest (currently in my name under the Gift to Minor's Act). My daughter's father has a life estate in said property. Initially, my daughter's father and Central Electric could not agree upon the money that Central Electric was willing to pay. Courtney's father has now come to an agreement with Central Electric. The only reason that I am involved is because of the present status of the deed for my daughter's interest. No legal action has been filed. And since the parties have now reached an agreement, no legal action is necessary.

48. If you are in private practice, are you covered by malpractice insurance and, if so, how long have you carried malpractice insurance? If applicable, have you ever been covered

by a tail policy? If so, please explain when you were covered by a tail policy. Also, if applicable, indicate your coverage and deductible for your current malpractice policy.

N/A

49. Have you ever, in South Carolina or any other jurisdiction, as a lawyer, judge, or other professional, been cautioned with or without a finding of misconduct, sanctioned, or disciplined for lawyer, judicial, or other professional misconduct or has any jurisdiction found that you committed any misconduct? If so, give the details and describe any final disposition. Include any and all confidential and public sanctions, disciplines, letters of caution, or findings of misconduct of any kind. Private or confidential dispositions will be redacted.

[Yes and no responses are redacted for all candidates unless there is a public discipline.]

50. Have you ever been investigated by the Department of Social Services? If so, give the details and the resolution. Has your name ever been enrolled on the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect? If so, give the details.

No

51. Have you directly or indirectly requested the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened, or have you been offered a conditional pledge of support by any legislator pending the outcome of your screening? Have you received the assurance of any public official or public employee that they will seek the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened? If so, give details.

No

52. Have you requested any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf before the final and formal screening report has been released? Describe the campaigning you have done for this election and include a list of those individuals you have asked to campaign on your behalf and, to the best of your knowledge, those who have campaigned for you on their own initiative.

No

53. Are you familiar with the 48-hour rule, which prohibits a candidate from seeking pledges until after the draft report becomes final, which occurs on the day and time specified on the Commission's published screening schedule?

Yes

54. Since submitting your letter of intent to become a candidate, have you or has anyone acting on your behalf contacted any member of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission about your candidacy or intention to become a candidate? If so, give details.

No

55. List the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of five (5) persons from whom you are providing references. Also, provide the Commission with **original letters** of recommendation from each person listed herein, including their signature (preferably in blue ink). **The Commission will not accept a photocopy or electronic submission of a letter of recommendation and failure to include all five (5) original letters of recommendation in your packet when you submit it will render your packet incomplete.** Please **do not** have references mail your reference letters to the Commission directly. *You must return the five (5) original letters of recommendation to the Commission with your application.*

- (a) The Honorable Timothy M. Cain

[Redacted]

- (b) The Honorable Alexander Stephens Macaulay (retired)

[Redacted]

- (c) Evie Hughes
School District of Oconee County

[Redacted]

- (d) Lisa Burton
Oconee County Clerk of Court

[Redacted]

- (e) Richard A. Shirley
Anderson County Clerk of Court

[Redacted]

56. Are you active on or a member of a social media or Internet site such as, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, etc.?

If so, please list the account names for each account and the relevant platform.

I have an Instagram account. The account name is karen.ballenger.

How would your use of social media or other similar types of Internet sites be affected if you were serving in a judicial capacity?

My use of Instagram is strictly personal. I use it to receive promotions from stores. My daughter was in pageants. I still love to attend pageants. I keep up with the pageant community on this site. To the best of my recollection, I have never posted anything on Instagram.

57. List all civic, charitable, educational, social, and fraternal organizations of which you are or have been a member during the past five years and include any offices held in such a group, and any professional honors, awards, or other forms of recognition received and not listed elsewhere.

(a) Paul Hayne Circle (literary club). I am no longer a member.

(b) The Oconee County Assembly

58. Provide any other information that may reflect positively or negatively on your candidacy, or which you believe should be disclosed in connection with consideration of you for nomination for the position you seek. This information may include how your life experiences have affected or influenced the kind or type of judge you have been or plan to be.

I was fortunate to grow up in an environment in which I learned important values by following the examples set by my parents. These values have served me well as a family court judge.

Becoming a family court judge has allowed me to continue to grow and serve my community in a field about which I am very passionate. Prior to my election as a judge, I had over 20 years of experience in family court issues. In looking back at my legal career, I firmly believe that there have been many opportunities and experiences that have unknowingly brought me to where I am today.

The past nine years of my life have without a doubt been the most rewarding years of my life. As a family court judge, I firmly believe that we are the face of the judiciary. Most citizens at one point in their life find themselves in front of a family court judge. For the litigants in my courtroom, it is probably one of the most painful and scary times of their lives. I constantly remind myself of that fact, and I always try to take that into consideration when I am on the bench.

A successful family court judge that can best serve their community is one who is passionate for family law; understands the intricacies of domestic law and can handle the unique challenges that exist in family court. These are the goals that I set for myself every day since having the honor of serving my state as a family court judge.

YOUR SIGNATURE WILL BE HELD TO CONSTITUTE A WAIVER OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF ANY PROCEEDING BEFORE A GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE OR ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUR CREDIT.

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

Signature: _____

Sworn to before me this 15th day of July, 2021.

(Notary Signature)

(Notary Printed Name)
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission Expires: _____