



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

Family Court
(New Candidate)

Full Name: Holly Huggins Wall

Business Address: PO Box 947, Johnsonville, SC 29555

Business Telephone: 843-319-7179

1. Why do you want to serve as a Family Court Judge?

When I tried my first contested case in 2001, I knew I wanted to become a Family Court Judge. I have spent the last 21 years representing parties in Family Court learning the law of divorce, custody, equitable distribution, abuse and neglect, and juvenile justice. I have had the opportunity to appear before the most learned, patient, and astute Family Court Judges all over South Carolina. I have learned how a judge applies the law with fairness while protecting the best interests of the children.

I became a Certified Family Court Mediator in 2008 and have mediated contested cases all over South Carolina. I have had the opportunity to work with brilliant attorneys and see how each approaches their case. I have been able to learn from them while I mediated their cases which greatly expanded my knowledge of Family Court.

I became a Magistrate in 2019 so that I could train to be a judge in of preparation to be elected to the Family Court Bench. I have tried many bench trials, trials involving attorneys and *pro se* litigants. I have spent two years on the bench gathering the facts, ruling on motions, applying the law to the facts, and issuing orders. While I have enjoyed being a Magistrate, my first love is the law of Family Court and I would be honored to serve as a Family Court Judge.

2. Do you plan to serve your full term if 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? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?

Consistent with the Judicial Conduct Canons of Ethics and the SCRCP, *ex parte* communication is permissible to seek emergency restraining orders, to seek default judgments when the opposing party has had notice but has not appeared, consultation with a disinterested expert on the law, consultation with other judges, and consultation with court clerks and personnel for scheduling purposes. A judge is also allowed to engage in *ex parte* communications for emergencies, as long as the opposing party has the opportunity to be heard and neither party will gain an advantage by the action.

I would have my secretary intercept inappropriate attempts to contact me and ensure that all parties have knowledge of the communications.

Except in those rare cases as stated above, I have a strict policy prohibiting *ex parte* communications in cases coming before me. I believe that *ex parte* communications result, in the very least, in the appearance of impropriety and should be avoided.

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?

It has been my practice as a Magistrate to recuse myself if a party feels that I may have any bias. As a Family Court Judge, I would do the same. While I may know that I could be impartial, the party still feels that they are on uneven ground. As a Family Court Judge, I would grant the Motion to Recuse to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

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

I would recuse myself to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

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

I would follow Judicial Conduct Canon 4 regarding accepting gifts or social hospitality. I will not accept, and will encourage members of my family not to accept, a gift, bequest, favor or loan excepting the exceptions listed in 4D(5)(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), and (i). I would only accept social hospitality that is commensurate with the exceptions above as "ordinary social hospitality".

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?

I would take appropriate action or measures as required by Judicial Conduct Canon 3 if I receive information that indicates a substantial likelihood that raises a substantial question regarding a violation by a lawyer or a fellow judge. This would require me to report the violation to disciplinary counsel.

10. 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.

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

I have raised money for my church's youth group in recent years. I have not donated to any political campaign in the past ten years. From 2012 – 2017, I assisted in hosting a cheerleading "mini-camp" to raise money for the Johnsonville High School Cheerleading program.

12. Do you have any business activities that you would envision remaining involved with if elected to the bench?

No.

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

I would ask the prevailing party to draft the order. Either my secretary or I would draft the orders for *pro se* actions and I would make use of the form orders.

14. If elected, what method would you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

I would have a calendaring system that gives alerts so that deadlines are met. I would keep a current docket and notebook of hearings so that my secretary and I could be certain that deadlines are not missed and that orders are submitted timely.

15. If elected, what specific actions or steps would you take to ensure that the guidelines of the guardian ad litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case?

When appointing a guardian ad litem, I would request the language of the order spells out their specific duties. I would set a reasonable fee cap that would require a court order to raise the cap so that the actions of the guardian ad litem could be reviewed before the Court with the parties present. This method controls fees and conflicts with the guardian ad litem before the final hearing.

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

I find that "judicial activism" has no place on the Family Court Bench. Family Court judges do not make the law but interpret and apply it to each case.

17. 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 was a middle school and high school mock trial coach for ten (10) years. I plan to continue in the mock trial program should I be elected. The best way to improve our law, legal system, and administration of justice is in the education of our young people. There are now seven young lawyers and one in law school that come from our tiny Johnsonville mock trial program. They are solicitors, public defenders, and private attorneys making a positive impact on our world. This program has also produced doctors, pharmacists, physician assistants, nurses, certified public accountants, and other professions that are making important contributions to society. I believe that educating our youth is the key to improvement in our legal system.

I would also participate in speaking at CLEs to assist attorneys in keeping abreast of the changes in the law of Family Court and issues that are being presented in Family Court.

18. 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?

My husband is used to me working an extended work week and my children are in college and graduate school. I do not feel that serving as a judge would strain my personal relationships at all. As an attorney for twenty-one years and a Magistrate for two years, my family and friends are well aware that I cannot discuss the cases with which I am involved.

19. Would you give any special considerations to a pro se litigant in family court?

While serving as a Magistrate, I have had many opportunities to preside over pro se litigants. While I cannot give them legal advice, I make every effort to make them feel heard and help them understand the legal process for their individual case. As a Family Court Judge, I would ensure that the litigants are treated fairly and

courteously and feel that they have access to the Family Court system.

20. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality?

No.

21. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved?

No.

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

Yes.

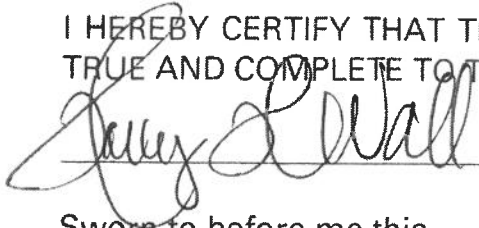
23. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply?

The appropriate demeanor for a judge is courteous, patient, dignified, and fair. My experience as a Magistrate has allowed me to practice this in the courtroom and outside the courtroom. I would never do anything that would bring shame on the judiciary or impugn the Court in any way.

24. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public who would appear before you, especially with a criminal defendant? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or a pro se litigant?

No and no.

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: _____