



**JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION
PERSONAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE
2025**

1. Judicial placement for which you are applying:

Circuit Court Judge, Eleventh Circuit Court, Seat 3

2. Are you currently serving in some capacity as a judge (to include municipal, magistrate, etc.)? If so, state the position. If part-time, please indicate.

Yes. My current position is Circuit Court Judge, Eleventh Circuit Court, Seat 3

Personal

3. Name: The Honorable Debra Ruilova McCaslin

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

Maiden Name: Debra Yvonne Ruilova

Name Change by Stepfather on 2/15/73: Debra Yvonne Gardner

Previous Married Name: Debra Yvonne Chapman

Married Name: Debra Ruilova McCaslin (Debbie)

Home Address: [Redacted]

County of Residence: Lexington

Business Address: 205 East Main Street, Suite 463
Lexington, South Carolina 29072

E-Mail Address: [Redacted]

Telephone Number: (home): [Redacted]
(office): (803) 785-8495
(cell): [Redacted]

4. Date of Birth: [Redacted], 1960
Place of Birth: Tampa, Florida

5. 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

6. SCDL# or SCHD#: [Redacted]
Voter Registration Number: [Redacted]
7. Have you served in the military? 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.
- No
8. Family Status:
- (a) State whether you are single, married, widowed, divorced, or separated.
- Married
- (b) If married, state the date of your marriage and your spouse's full name and occupation.
- Married on June 25, 2006 to Michael Wayne McCaslin.
Two stepchildren
Michael Wayne McCaslin retired from S.C. Department of Transportation as District Mechanical Engineer on December 31, 2017.
- (c) If widowed, list the name(s) of spouse(s). N/A
- (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.
- Divorced on August 18, 1983, Eleventh Circuit Family Court, South Carolina.
Moving Party: Debra Y. Chapman
Grounds: Habitual Drunkenness
No Children – He is deceased.
- (e) State the names of your children and their ages. If your children are NOT full-time students, also include the occupation and employer of each child.
- [Redacted]
[Redacted]
9. 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) Midlands Technical College September 1984-1985 job opportunity
(b) College of Charleston January 1987 to May 1990 Bachelor of Arts
(c) USC-School of Law August 1990 to May 1993 Juris Doctorate

10. 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.

- (a) Student Body Legislator, USC Law School, 1991-1992
- (b) Student Chapter President, S.C. Trial Lawyers Association, USC Law School, 1993
- (c) Member Phi Delta Phi Law School Fraternity, USC Law School, 1990-1993

11. 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.

None

12. 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) Lexington County Bar Association
- (c) Richland County Bar Association
- (d) S.C. Circuit Judges Advisory Committee (2025-present)
- (e) S.C. Association of Circuit Court Judges (2020-present); Treasurer (2023-Present)
- (f) ABA – American Bar Association
- (g) Womens Law Association (WLA)

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

I am currently a member of LinkedIn. I joined this website while in private practice for professional purposes. I am not a member of Facebook, Twitter or any other social media.

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

LinkedIn – [Redacted]

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

I am not a fan of social media and very rarely look at it. It has not affected me in my judicial capacity.

14. 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.

None

15. 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.

Throughout my life, a variety of experiences have profoundly shaped the type of judge I am today. Growing up as one of six children in a small rural community, I learned the values of resilience and hard work. I was able to pay for my college education while working full-time, and these experiences have instilled in me a deep sense of empathy and integrity. These experiences have taught me the value of compassion and integrity, guiding me to make decisions that not only uphold law but also consider the human element behind each case.

16. List the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of 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 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 5 original letters of recommendation to the Commission with your application.*

- (a) Joshua Kendrick, [Redacted]
- (b) Leigh Leventis, [Redacted]
- (c) Theo Williams, [Redacted]
- (d) Leon Lott, [Redacted]
- (e) Neal Lourie, [Redacted]

Experience

17. 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.

- (a) State of South Carolina 1993 – Bar Exam taken one time.

18. 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) J. Preston Strom, Jr.

August 1991 to June 1993

Attorney at Law
Columbia, S.C.

Law Clerk – Duties involved legal research and analysis, prepare legal documents, compile case materials for trial, interviewing clients, drafting letters to clients, solicitors or other parties, assisting with telephone inquiries and other routine administrative duties.

(b) Leigh Leventis
Attorney at Law
Columbia, S.C.

June 1993 to December 1995

Law Clerk/Attorney - Duties included those of a law clerk until I passed the bar in November, 1993. As an attorney my duties changed to include criminal and civil litigation including magistrate, state and federal courts. Responsible for all aspects of client cases: analyzed case documents and evidence, developed case strategy, conducted legal research and writing, interviewed clients and witnesses, provided legal advice to clients and represented clients at all court hearings.

(c) Debra Y. Chapman, LLC
Columbia, S.C.

December 1995 to April 2020

Sole Practitioner – Represent clients in numerous criminal and civil matters at state and federal levels. Litigated an average of 125 cases per year. I also managed all aspects of my practice including day to day operations, administration, profit and loss, business checking account, business savings account, trust account, and employee supervision.

(d) S.C. Court Administration
Columbia, S.C.

April 2020 to June 30, 2020

Staff Attorney – Responsible for performing complex legal research, analyzing relevant law, drafting letters, forms, memorandums, and Orders as Circuit Court, Family Court, Master-in-Equity, or Probate Court matters arise and self-edits all to ensure the substance, grammar and legal authority is correct. Orally and in writing advise, recommend, and research any questions or concerns regarding Court procedures for the Court Representative, Judges, or Court staff using a diverse set of legal resources. Read and review legislative bills.

(e) Circuit Court Judge

July 1, 2020 to present

Justices/judges applying for re-election to their current position may omit Questions 19–25. If you are a full-time judge seeking a judgeship different than your current position, Questions 19-25 should be answered based on your experience prior to serving on the bench.

19. 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, 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.

N/A

20. 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:

N/A

21. 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:

N/A

22. During the past five years:
- (a) What percentage of your practice was in trial court, including cases that settled prior to trial?
 - (b) What number of cases went to trial and resulted in a verdict?
 - (c) What number of cases went to trial and resolved after the plaintiff's or State's case? For the purposes of this question, resolved includes settlement, plea, judge's order during a motion hearing, etc.
 - (d) What number of your cases settled after a jury was selected but prior to opening statements?
 - (e) Did you most often serve as sole counsel, chief counsel, second chair, or co-counsel?
 - (f) For sitting judges seeking a judgeship different than your current position, during the five years prior to your election to the bench, what percentage of your practice was in trial court, including matters that settled prior to trial?

N/A

23. List five of the most significant litigated matters you have personally handled in trial court, 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)

N/A

24. 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)

N/A

25. 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)

N/A

26. 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.

Yes. I am currently a circuit court judge and have held office since July 1, 2020. I was originally elected on February 5, 2020 to Circuit Court Judge, At Large, Seat 13. This year, my seat changed to a resident seat - Circuit Court Judge, 11th Circuit Court, Seat 3.

27. If the answer to question 26 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) State v. Jeremy Cornish, Case Nos. 2019A3210202505-2508; S.C. Court of Appeals, Appellate No. 2022-001536. This case involved a triple homicide and the defendant filed a Motion to Suppress DNA Evidence and a Motion to Suppress Statement. I wrote an order denying the Defendant's Motion to Suppress DNA and granting Defendant's Motion to Suppress Statement. The Court of Appeals held oral arguments during the June 2025 term. No decision has been made as of this date.

(b) State v. Michia Johnson, Case No. 2022A4620303045,46; This case involved the Defendant seeking immunity for prosecution based on the provisions of the Protection of Persons and Property Act, S.C. Code Ann §16-11-410, et. seq. No appeal.

(c) Gene Tony Cooper v. State of South Carolina, 1990-GS-3283-84; This was an order denying Petitioner's Application for DNA Testing and Motion for New Trial.

(d) Michelle Cha Holliman, et. al. v We Are Sharing Hope, et. al. This was an Order regarding Discovery. Unpublished Opinion No. 2023-UP-205.

(e) Amber Jones, et. al. v. S.C. Department of Social Services, et. al., 2021-CP-32-04077. Order for summary judgment granted in part, denied in part. This case involved allegations of negligent supervision.

28. 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.

United States Supreme Court, 1999
United States Court of Appeals, 1994
United States District Court, 1993
South Carolina Supreme Court, 1993

29. 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.

SCDTAA Trial Academy – participated as a judge. June 20, 2025
SCADL – Leadership Luncheon “Path to the Bench”– speaker - 3/7/25
Pleasant Hill Middle School – mock trial team shadowed court for legal education. 2/11/25.
SCADL Mental Health – Speaker – Mental Health and the Courts. 2/7/25
National Trial Competition Region 5 – judge - 2/2/25.
Middle School Mock Trial Regional Competition – judge - 10/28/24
Joseph Rice Law School, “How to be a New Criminal Practitioner” – speaker - 10/16/24
SCACDL – “Back to the Basics” – speaker – 2/24
SC Bar Convention, “Keeping the Wheels Turning” - speaker - 1/20/23
SCACDL – “Back to the Basics” – speaker – 2/23
Middle School Mock Trial – judge – 11/2023
SC Bar Convention, Trial and Appellate – speaker – 1/2022
SC Circuit Judge Trial School – speaker - July 2022
The American Mock Trial Association – Soda City Trials – judge –2020-22

30. Provide, as a separate attachment, your continuing legal or judicial education report from the past five years.

See attached CLE Compliance Reports.

31. List all published books and articles you have written and give citations and the dates of publication for each.

None

32. 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 and 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.)

N/A

33. 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

Personal Conduct

34. 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 of the following: federal law or regulation; state law or regulation; 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.]

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

No

36. 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.

I had a client appeal a fee dispute decision to Circuit Court. This was dismissed in 2017.

37. 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.

N/A

38. Have you ever, as a lawyer, judge, or other professional, been cautioned, sanctioned, or disciplined for lawyer, judicial, or other professional misconduct with or with a finding of misconduct? 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.]

39. 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.

Financial

40. Provide, **as a separate attachment**, a complete, current financial net worth statement that itemizes the below in detail. Note that a net worth statement form is provided with this questionnaire and you must use this format for submission of your financial statement.
- (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.

My financial net worth statement is attached.

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

41. (a) Have you filed state and federal income tax returns for the last 5 years? If no, please provide details.

Yes

(b) Have you or any business with which you are associated been delinquent in any local, state, or federal taxes? If yes, please provide details.

No

(c) Has a tax lien or other collection procedure ever been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? If yes, please provide details.

No

42. Have you ever defaulted on a student loan? If so, please provide details.

No

43. Have you ever filed for bankruptcy? If so, please provide details, along with proof of satisfaction of any liens or defaults.

No

Conflict of Interest

44. 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

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

Yes. I applied for United States Magistrate – 2007 and Lexington County Magistrate – 2014.

46. 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.

No

47. 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

48. Are you now or have you ever been employed as a “lobbyist,” as defined by S.C. Code Section 2-17-10(13), or have you acted in the capacity of a “lobbyist’s principal,” as defined by S.C. Code Section 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

49. 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 Section 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

50. 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

51. 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 4 years. If you participate in any employer-mandated contributions to a PAC or any other political entity, please describe and note your personal involvement in contributions. If you are a sitting judge, please include such contributions since your last screening.

None

52. Have you or 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

53. 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.

I own an office building and lease space to two lawyers. I believe it would be a conflict of interest if they appeared in front of me while leasing office space. When these lawyers appear in front of me, I resolve the potential conflict of interest under Rule 501, Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 3(F) Remittal of Disqualification. If both parties cannot agree, then I would recuse myself from hearing the case. As of the date of this writing, I have not been asked to recuse myself from any case.

54. 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.

None

55. 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

56. 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.

Please see attached broker records.

57. 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

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

No

59. 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

60. 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

61. Are you familiar with the 12 days' rule as provided by Section 2-19-70, 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

62. Since submitting your letter of intent to become a candidate, have you or 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

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 ____ day of _____, 2025.

(Notary Signature)

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