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**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARINGS**

*November 20, 2025*

**2025 SC Judicial Merit Selection Commission**

REPORTER: Kathryn Bostrom

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JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION  
TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

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BEFORE: REPRESENTATIVE "MICAH" CASKEY, IV, CHAIRMAN  
SENATOR LUKE A. RANKIN, VICE CHAIRMAN  
SENATOR GEORGE E. CAMPSEN  
SENATOR OVERTURE WALKER  
REPRESENTATIVE WALLACE H. "JAY" JORDAN, JR.  
REPRESENTATIVE LEONIDAS E. "LEON" STAVRINAKIS  
JOHN T. LAY  
CHRISTIAN STEGMAIER  
MARY AGNES HOOD CRAIG  
LANNEAU W. LAMBERT JR.  
PETER D. PROTOPAPAS  
THE HONORABLE JOSEPH MONROE STRICKLAND  
ERIN B. CRAWFORD, CHIEF COUNSEL

\* \* \* \* \*

DATE: Thursday, November 20, 2025  
TIME: 9:30 a.m.  
LOCATION: Gressette Building, Room 105  
1101 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201  
REPORTED BY: Kathryn B. Bostrom, Court Reporter

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Court Reporter's Legend:

dashes [--] Intentional or purposeful]

interruption

[ph] Denotes phonetically written

[sic] Written as said

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Good morning, everyone. My name is  
3 Micah Caskey. Today is Thursday, October 20th,  
4 and we are going to resume today -- November 20th  
5 -- and we are going to resume with our hearings  
6 today. We have a pending motion from Senator  
7 Rankin to move into executive session, receive a  
8 legal briefing. That motion is seconded by  
9 Representative Jordan. All in favor, signify by  
10 saying aye.

11 MEMBERS: Aye.

12 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Opposed? Nay. The ayes have it.  
13 We will go into executive session to receive a  
14 legal briefing. Thank you.

15 (Off the record)

16 Executive Session was held from 9:11 to 10:17 am

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.  
18 We are now back on the record. We are out of  
19 executive session. For the record, while we were  
20 in executive session receiving a legal briefing,  
21 no decisions were made, no votes were taken. We  
22 turn now to the first matter of business this  
23 morning, which is elections of -- Excuse me,  
24 votes -- determinations of qualifications of  
25 candidates who appeared yesterday. The first

1 candidate that we have up is the Honorable S.  
2 Philip "Phil" Lenski, who is a candidate for  
3 reelection to Seat 6 at the Administrative Law  
4 Court. The question is finding of qualification.  
5 All in favor of qualification, please signify by  
6 raising your hand and stating aye.

7 MEMBERS: Aye.

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The ayes have  
9 it. Is unanimous 12 to 0 in favor of  
10 qualification of Judge Lenski. The next  
11 candidate is the Honorable Debra A. Matthews, who  
12 is a candidate for re-election to Seat 2 in the  
13 6th Judicial Circuit Family Court. The question  
14 is qualification of Judge Matthews. All in  
15 favor, signify by raising your hand and saying  
16 aye.

17 MEMBERS: Aye.

18 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The ayes have  
19 it. That is unanimous 12 to 0 in favor of  
20 qualification. The next candidate is the  
21 Honorable Melissa M. Frazier, who's a candidate  
22 for re-election to Seat 3 in the 15th Judicial  
23 Circuit Family Court. The question is  
24 qualification of Judge Frazier. All in favor of  
25 qualification signifying by saying aye and

1 raising your hand.

2 MEMBERS: Aye.

3 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. Ayes have it.

4 It is unanimous again, 12 to 0 in favor of  
5 qualification of Judge Frazier. The next  
6 candidate is the Honorable J. Camden West, who is  
7 a candidate for reappointment to the Berkeley  
8 County Master in Equity seat. Question is  
9 qualification of Judge West. All in favor of  
10 qualification, signify by raising your hand and  
11 saying aye.

12 MEMBERS: Aye.

13 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. And the ayes  
14 have it in favor of qualification of Judge West,  
15 unanimously, 12 to 0. The next candidate is the  
16 Honorable Elizabeth Biggerstaff York, who is a  
17 candidate for Seat 3, 4th Judicial Circuit Family  
18 Court Bench. Question is qualification of Judge  
19 York. All in favor of qualification, signify by  
20 raising your hand and saying aye.

21 MEMBERS: Aye.

22 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The ayes have  
23 it. It is unanimous 12 to 0 in favor of  
24 qualification. Turn now to the Administrative  
25 Law Court, Seat 4, for which there are several

1 candidates. The first candidate is Erika Easler.  
2 I would note for the record that I personally  
3 have not participated and have not participated  
4 in either the discussion of her candidacy or in  
5 participating in the election other than purely a  
6 ministerial role of facilitating the vote of  
7 qualification. So the question is qualification  
8 of Erika Easler. All in favor of qualification  
9 signify by raising your hand and saying aye.  
10 Seeing none, the next question is non-  
11 qualification of judge or, excuse me, of Erika  
12 Easler, all -- Let me back up. I have said that  
13 wrong. The question was initially all in favor  
14 of qualification of Erika Easler. That vote was  
15 -- there were no votes in favor. Votes against  
16 would be the question. Apologies for misstating  
17 that. So the question is against qualification  
18 of Erika Easler. All in favor of that motion, if  
19 I can say that -- is that clear enough what the  
20 question is? And I apologize for not doing that,  
21 would be nay. We're signifying, raising your  
22 hand and saying nay.

23 MEMBERS: Nay.

24 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: And that appears to be 11 against  
25 the finding of qualification. And I apologize

1 for misstating that. I don't have a script for  
2 this part, so I've gotten it right earlier in the  
3 week, but missed that today. The next candidate  
4 is Jason P. Luther. And the question is  
5 qualification of Mr. Luther. All in favor of  
6 qualification, signify by raising your hand and  
7 saying aye.

8 MEMBERS: Aye.

9 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. That was  
10 unanimous 12 to 0 in favor of qualification of  
11 Mr. Luther. The next candidate is Kelly  
12 Rainsford. Question being qualification of Ms.  
13 Rainsford. All in favor, signify by raising your  
14 hand and saying aye.

15 MEMBERS: Aye.

16 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. That is again  
17 unanimous 12 to 0 in favor of qualification of  
18 Ms. Rainsford. The next candidate is Michael S.  
19 Traynham. The question being qualification of  
20 Mr. Traynham. All in favor of qualification  
21 signify bu raising your hand and saying aye.

22 MEMBERS: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. Ayes have it.  
24 And that is unanimous 12 to 0 in favor of  
25 qualification of Mr. Traynham. The next

1 candidate is Nicole T. Wetherton. The question  
2 being qualification of Ms. Wetherton. All in  
3 favor, signify by raising your hand and saying  
4 aye.

5 MEMBERS: Aye

6 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The ayes have  
7 it. That is unanimous in favor of qualification  
8 of Ms. Wetherton. The next candidate is the  
9 honorable Barbara "Bobbie" Wofford-Kanwat.  
10 Question being qualification of Judge Wofford-  
11 Kanwat. All in favor, signify by raising your  
12 hand and saying aye.

13 MEMBERS: Aye.

14 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Please leave your hands up so we  
15 can get the count. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.  
16 There's eight votes in favor of qualification.  
17 All opposed to qualification. Signify, raising  
18 your hand and saying no.

19 MEMBERS: No.

20 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: That is four votes against  
21 qualification. She is found qualified by a vote  
22 of 8 to 4. Turning now to the next candidate.  
23 Which is a election for -- Excuse me. A question  
24 of re-election for Seat 5 in the 9th Judicial  
25 Circuit Family Court, the Honorable Spiros

1           Stavros Ferderigos. All in favor of -- the  
2           question being qualification of Judge Ferderigos.  
3           All in favor of qualification, signify raising  
4           your hand and saying aye.

5           MEMBERS: Aye.

6           CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The vote being  
7           unanimous in favor of qualification 12 to 0.  
8           Judge Ferderigos is found to be qualified and  
9           nominated. All right. Having dispensed with  
10          that portion of our work this morning, we turn  
11          now to the resumption of our screening hearings.  
12          And before us, we have a candidate for an active  
13          retired status of the Circuit Court. Judge  
14          Hughston. Judge Hughston, if you would please,  
15          sir, come to the podium. Good morning, Judge.

16          JUDGE HUGHSTON: Good morning.

17          CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Nice to see you, sir.

18          JUDGE HUGHSTON: Good to see you.

19          CHAIRMAN CASKEY: If you would, please, sir, raise  
20          your right hand.

21          WHEREUPON:

22                        THOMAS LESLIE HUGHSTON, JR., being duly  
23                        sworn and cautioned to speak the truth, the whole  
24                        truth and nothing but the truth, testifies as  
25                        follows:

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. And you've  
2 indicated that you have some materials you want  
3 to pass --

4 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Yeah, it's --

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- to staff here.

6 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Please.

7 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Do you have any issue with us  
8 including those in the record?

9 JUDGE HUGHSTON: No, I want you to.

10 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. So ordered. Judge,  
11 there should be some materials in front of you,  
12 which are the Personal Data Questionnaire and the  
13 Sworn Statement that you submitted to the  
14 Commission. Are there any changes that need to  
15 be made or updates to those?

16 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Not that I know of.

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Do you have any objection to our  
18 making those a part of the record?

19 JUDGE HUGHSTON: No, I do not.

20 (EXHIBIT NO. 1 MARKED FOR  
21 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)  
22 PDQ - Thomas L. Hughston)  
23 (EXHIBIT NO. 2 MARKED FOR  
24 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (3 pages)  
25 Sworn Statement - Thomas L.

1 Hughston)  
2 (EXHIBIT NO. 3 MARKED FOR  
3 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)  
4 Statement - Thomas L. Hughston)

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Let me give staff a moment to do  
6 that.

7 JUDGE HUGHSTON: I'm going to follow this script, so  
8 to speak. I'm going to follow this, if you don't  
9 mind. I just want to --

10 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Just one second.

11 JUDGE HUGHSTON: -- let you aware -- yes.

12 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Let me just -- another moment,  
13 please. I'm going to have -- make sure staff has  
14 got the record organized for the folks who are --  
15 the half dozens of folks who are watching who may  
16 want to later review those documents. Okay,  
17 we've got them. Judge, the Judicial Merit  
18 Selection Commission has thoroughly investigated  
19 your qualifications for the bench. Our inquiry  
20 has focused on the nine evaluative criteria and  
21 has included a thorough study of your application  
22 materials, a ballot box survey, verification of  
23 your compliance with state ethics laws, a search  
24 of newspaper articles in which your name appears,  
25 a study of previous screenings, and a check for

1 economic conflicts of interest. We have received  
2 no affidavits in opposition to your election and  
3 no witnesses are present to testify. Judge, I  
4 know you've indicated you wanted to speak to some  
5 -- with some of your remarks.

6 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Well, it's just -- I'll let you  
7 govern what procedure, you know, as far as how  
8 you want to go.

9 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Judge, we have -- because we have  
10 those now in the record --

11 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Okay.

12 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- you don't need to say all that.

13 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Okay.

14 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: However, if you'd like to make a  
15 brief statement, you can. We've kept you long  
16 enough and certainly appreciate your patience  
17 this morning with scheduling. If you don't want  
18 to make a brief statement now, I'll recognize  
19 Counsel for some questions and --

20 JUDGE HUGHSTON: All right.

21 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- give you a chance to say  
22 anything you like at the end.

23 JUDGE HUGHSTON: All right. Well, if you would, I  
24 appreciate it. If you would consider the read  
25 remarks that I've given you this morning, that'll



1 still enjoy the work. I like the people and I like  
2 the places that I go. I like the good lawyers that I  
3 see. I like the interesting facts that I see, and I  
4 like to see and apply the law as I understand it to  
5 be. So I still enjoy the work, you know. I never  
6 developed any real hobbies. I'm not a golfer. One  
7 time, I was a member of a quail hunting club, but the  
8 quail pretty much went away from the Allendale area  
9 where I used to go to quail hunt, you know. And so I  
10 gave that up. Never was a golfer, not a fisherman.  
11 Now, the only avocation -- the only hobby I had -- I  
12 don't know if any of you know that -- but I was a high  
13 school and college football official for 25 years, you  
14 know. And so that's the only hobby that I ever  
15 developed was I was a college football official in the  
16 Southern Conference. You know, as a matter of fact,  
17 I'm wearing the watch that I was given when I retired  
18 from that, a 25-year watch, you know, from the  
19 Southern Conference, and I must say -- I'd like to say  
20 that the watch is not as good -- it's not as accurate  
21 as it used to be. What it does, the second hand  
22 pauses and it moves and then it pauses, and then  
23 three or four seconds later, it jumps over and it  
24 catches up, and it goes on. So it's still accurate,  
25 you know, overall accurate, but it's not as good as it

1 was when it was brand new, and everything. But it  
2 still works fine, it still tells me the time, and so  
3 forth. Now, the date doesn't work like that. There's  
4 something wrong with that part of it. But like I say,  
5 I think that maybe is kind of the way I am. I'm not  
6 as accurate -- I'm not as fast as I once was, but I  
7 think I still do a good job to keep up with the times.

8 **Q. Thank you. Judge Hughston, how often do you currently**  
9 **serve in your capacity as an active retired judge?**

10 A. About once a month.

11 **Q. Judge Hughston, what do you think your reputation is**  
12 **among attorneys who practice before you?**

13 A. I hope it's fair. That means I listen to both sides,  
14 whatever they want me to hear, whatever they want to  
15 present, and then I take all that into consideration  
16 before I make a decision.

17 **Q. Judge Hughston, the Commission received 363 ballot box**  
18 **surveys regarding you with 44 additional comments.**  
19 **The ballot box surveys, for example, contain the**  
20 **following positive comments: Always fair and**  
21 **thoughtful. A faunt of wisdom and untapped**  
22 **experience. Judge Hughston is a dedicated public**  
23 **servant South Carolina is lucky to still have active**  
24 **and is a pleasure to appear before. The following**  
25 **written comments expressed some concerns. Of those**

1           **comments, several indicated that Judge Hughston's**  
2           **capacity to continue serving as a judge has declined.**  
3           **What response would you offer to this concern?**

4           A.   Well, I certainly have a mobility issue; that is, I  
5           use a cane to get around.  And now, I've had -- I've  
6           quit counting the number of artificial parts I have in  
7           me now, you know.  But I still manage to get where I  
8           want to go and do what I want to do, in connection  
9           with physical activities, you know.  And maybe my --  
10          again, maybe my mental abilities are not quite as fast  
11          as they once were, and so forth.  I may take a little  
12          bit longer thinking about things, you know, but I  
13          think I still do a fair job in regard to making those  
14          decisions.

15         **Q.   Thank you, Judge.**

16         MS. CRATER:  I would note that the Low Country  
17                 Citizens Committee found Judge Hughston qualified  
18                 in the evaluative criteria of constitutional  
19                 qualifications, physical health and mental  
20                 stability.  The Committee found him well  
21                 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical  
22                 fitness, professional and academic ability,  
23                 character, reputation, experience and judicial  
24                 temperament.  The Committee stated, in summary:  
25                 Great experience, considerable service.  I would

1 note, for the record, that any concerns raised  
2 during the investigation regarding the candidate  
3 were incorporated into the questions of the  
4 candidate today. Mr. Chairman, I have no further  
5 questions.

6 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, ma'am. Representative  
7 Stavrinakis.

8 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Judge, good morning.

9 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Morning.

10 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: So good to see you.

11 JUDGE HUGHSTON: You too.

12 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: I just want to thank you  
13 for being willing to continue to serve. Your  
14 experience and wisdom are incredibly valuable on  
15 the bench and in the profession. And you said  
16 you don't have any hobbies that you developed.  
17 But I'm going to tell you that you did develop  
18 one, whether you meant to or not, and that was as  
19 a mentor.

20 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Well, thank you.

21 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: A mentor to judges and  
22 lawyers. And I appreciate your service and I  
23 appreciate your passion for continuing. So I  
24 just wanted to say that to you and thank you for  
25 continuing to serve.

1 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Well, I appreciate that very much.

2 But you mentioned a mentor. One of the items I  
3 mentioned in that -- what I've give you there is  
4 that I recently had the pleasure of administering  
5 the oath of office to a new circuit judge, who  
6 was, at one time, one of my law clerks. I keep  
7 up with a few of my law clerks that -- over the  
8 years and all. And Martha Rivers Davidson, who  
9 you elected as a new circuit judge a year or so  
10 ago, when she was being sworn in in Aiken, she  
11 asked me to come up and administer the oath to  
12 her. And so that -- that was, as you can tell  
13 me, I'm touched by just thinking about that, you  
14 know. She was one of my law clerks and, like I  
15 say, you know, I'm glad that she's now an active  
16 circuit judge and I hope that some of the things  
17 that I did, and so forth, you know, mentored her  
18 the way Judge Francis Nicholson, who was my  
19 mentor, you know, and whose place I took, you  
20 know. So I am appreciative of that.

21 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Any other members of the Commission?

22 Ms. Craig.

23 MS. CRAIG: Good morning, Judge Hughston.

24 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Good morning.

25 MS. CRAIG: It's been my great privilege to work with

1 you my entire legal career. We've had trials  
2 together and more hearings than I can really  
3 remember. But my experience with you has been  
4 consistent with these ballot box surveys, and I'd  
5 just like to read a few more that all say what an  
6 excellent judge you are. You could not find a  
7 better candidate. He is the gold standard for  
8 circuit court judges. This has been my  
9 experience with you. And I join Leon in saying  
10 thank you for your willingness to continue to  
11 serve. You've done an exemplary job.

12 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Well, thank you very much for that. I  
13 appreciate that, you know. And I can't help  
14 thinking about also, as I think about my  
15 experiences, some of the cases -- you'll read  
16 about that in what I've written about. But  
17 anyway, the longest civil jury trial I had  
18 involved your father, you know, and it was a  
19 three-week-long civil conspiracy, business,  
20 dispute in Charleston, you know, and he was one  
21 of -- representing one of the three defendants.  
22 And I have to -- if you don't mind, I want to  
23 tell you a little -- what I think is humorous  
24 part of -- that happened during that trial, you  
25 know. But anyway, like I say, three-week civil

1 jury trial and three different good groups of  
2 lawyers on the defense side and two good lawyers  
3 on the plaintiff's side, you know. And anyway,  
4 so during the trial, of course, your father made  
5 objections, and so forth. And he would --  
6 usually, he would precede, at some point during  
7 his argument to me as far as motions or whatever  
8 objections were concerned, he'd say, Your Honor,  
9 this is the most important point, in this case.  
10 You know, This is it. You've got to -- what's  
11 your decision, you know. And I don't think I  
12 agreed with -- I don't think I ruled in his favor  
13 in regard to any of the points that he raised  
14 during the trial. I don't remember. But I just  
15 remember he was saying that, and everything. And  
16 the long and the short of the end of the case was  
17 the jury was out 15 minutes. After a three-week  
18 civil jury trial, the jury was out 15 minutes and  
19 came back in favor -- a verdict in favor of the  
20 defense, you know, a unanimous verdict in favor  
21 of the defense as far as this big case was  
22 concerned. And later on, I think maybe in a  
23 notice of appeal or something -- but it didn't  
24 get appealed. But anyway, in conversation with  
25 your father, I told him, You know, Bobby, you

1 know, that really was an important point in this  
2 case. If I'd have ruled in your favor, it'd  
3 probably only reversed, you know, it would be up  
4 on reversal or on appeal, you know, so it really  
5 was an important part, you know. And that was my  
6 take and a little moment that we had.

7 MS. CRAIG: That's a great story. Thank you for  
8 sharing it.

9 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Senator Rankin.

10 SENATOR RANKIN: Real quick. And I -- nothing  
11 required of you to answer this other than I'm --  
12 I spoke to you and your wife when I came in this  
13 morning. I just want to tell you congratulations  
14 on having a tiger in your tank --

15 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Thank you.

16 SENATOR RANKIN: -- who is from Anderson --

17 JUDGE HUGHSTON: That's right.

18 SENATOR RANKIN: -- where my mother is from. So bless  
19 you for continuing in this work.

20 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Thank you. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: So I see no other questions -- I'm  
22 sorry, Senator Campsen.

23 SENATOR CAMPSEN: This is not a legal question. This  
24 is a sports question.

25 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Okay.

1 SENATOR CAMPSEN: So I was interested in -- you were a  
2 Southern Conference --

3 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Right.

4 SENATOR CAMPSEN: -- football ref.

5 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Correct.

6 SENATOR CAMPSEN: What years were you a ref?

7 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Yeah, I quit in -- so my last year  
8 was 2000 when we moved to Charleston and all.  
9 And by the way, I didn't leave Greenwood for any  
10 ill reasons, or whatever. I went to the Citadel,  
11 as you know, and all, and which I always loved  
12 Charleston. Mary Ann had relatives in  
13 Charleston. I had friends, classmates in  
14 Charleston. And I probably worked in Charleston  
15 County as a circuit judge more than any other  
16 county in South Carolina before moving there, you  
17 know. I know the first seven weeks I served as a  
18 judge, I did that in Charleston, and all, and I  
19 had the first -- the three -- the first three  
20 criminal trials that I had were in Charleston,  
21 and I started with the big three. I had a murder  
22 trial. I had a -- what we call rape, or  
23 whatever, criminal sexual conduct trial and a  
24 burglary trial. Those were the first three  
25 criminal trials that I had in Charleston. Steve

1 Smutts -- some of you may know Steve -- he was  
2 involved in all those cases along with state --  
3 representing the state, you know. But anyway,  
4 what was your question? Excuse me.

5 SENATOR CAMPSEN: A question around being a referee.

6 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Oh, a referee. What do you want to  
7 know?

8 SENATOR CAMPSEN: What years? I played football at The  
9 Citadel --

10 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Okay, back up 25 years, you know,  
11 and five years -- 30 years before that. So I  
12 started in 1970. Where I got -- where that came  
13 about, I'll tell you this, you know, I played  
14 high school football for Greenwood High School  
15 back in those days. And we had a legendary  
16 coach, J. W. "Pinky" Babb, who, prior to the  
17 legendary Coach McKissick in Summerville, he had  
18 the record for the most -- coaching the most wins  
19 in a high school football in the United States  
20 and all. In my junior year, we were undefeated  
21 and the state champions at the highest level and  
22 all. But anyway, so I had that football  
23 background and all. And when I got back to  
24 Greenwood, one of the boys that I played with,  
25 he'd already started officiating and all. And so

1 I -- he was my drycleaning man. And so I found  
2 out through him about that and he invited me to  
3 go along with him to see what they did --

4 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Judge --

5 JUDGE HUGHSTON: -- on Fridays.

6 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- I apologize. I believe the real  
7 question is do you recall ever penalizing Senator  
8 Campsen and throwing flags on him?

9 JUDGE HUGHSTON: No, I don't. No, I do not.

10 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right.

11 JUDGE HUGHSTON: But anyway, that's how I got  
12 started. That's how I got started. You started  
13 officiating high school and then you, through  
14 whatever contacts you've made, and so forth, you  
15 move on to the college level and all, and I was  
16 lucky to be able to do that.

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Okay. All right.

18 SENATOR CAMPSSEN: And so my father probably practiced  
19 law -- George Campsen --

20 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Yeah, I know about him.

21 SENATOR CAMPSSEN: -- before you, I'm sure, so thank  
22 you.

23 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Thank you. If I wander too much. I  
24 apologize.

25 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: That's all right.

1 SENATOR CAMPSEN: We're quite used to it.

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: No offense to my seatmate here.

3 Judge, thank you very much for your service to  
4 the state. This will conclude this portion of  
5 the screening process. I appreciate your many  
6 years of service to the state of South Carolina,  
7 and your offering for continued service.

8 JUDGE HUGHSTON: And thank you for yours. Let me put  
9 this in, one other remembrance. The first time I  
10 appeared before a panel like this was before this  
11 building was built when I was a member of the  
12 house and I was -- served nine years in the  
13 house and, like I say, was selected to -- elected  
14 to take Francis Nicholson's place. And if I  
15 recall correctly, we met in the state capitol,  
16 you know, in a little room upstairs, and all,  
17 somewhere on the upper level on the senate side.  
18 I remember that. And the only person I remember  
19 being on the Committee was Ed Saleeby, Senator  
20 Saleeby from Hartsville, and all. And at some  
21 point during proceeding, he asked me, said, Well,  
22 why do you want to be a judge and all, and I  
23 don't remember exactly, you know, what I replied,  
24 but it was something along the lines of, Well,  
25 you know, I'm tired of having to work nights and

1 on weekends and Sundays, and so forth, getting  
2 ready to try cases and do what I had to do,  
3 writing briefs and writing orders, and so forth  
4 and so on. I'm tired of having to put in all  
5 those hours, you know. And I don't think I'm  
6 going to have to do that as a circuit judge. And  
7 he said, Well, I hope you don't think you're  
8 going to get a vacation. And it's turned out not  
9 to be a vacation, I can tell you that.

10 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Indeed, indeed. Well, thank you,  
11 sir. I appreciate you. Wish you all the best  
12 with the rest of your day and hope you travel  
13 home safely.

14 JUDGE HUGHSTON: Thank you very much. Appreciate --

15 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you.

16 JUDGE HUGHSTON: -- appreciate the opportunity.

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, Judge. All right. We  
18 will proceed now with the screening of our next  
19 candidate, which will require a bit of technical  
20 setup. So we'll just stand at ease for a moment  
21 while we do that.

22 (OFF THE RECORD)

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. We will go back on the  
24 record with our next screening. Ms. Dean, can  
25 you hear me?

1 MS. DEAN: I can hear you.

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Wonderful. We can hear you as  
3 well. I would note, for the record, that we are  
4 in a -- we are conducting this screening via  
5 Teams because of the acute exceptional  
6 circumstance. Appreciate you being available  
7 under these circumstances. Ms. Dean, if you  
8 would, please, raise your right hand and -- if  
9 you will just raise your right hand.

10 WHEREUPON:

11 ELNORA JONES DEAN, being duly sworn and  
12 cautioned to speak the truth, the whole truth and  
13 nothing but the truth, testifies as follows:

14 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Do you object to our making your  
15 redacted Personal Data Questionnaire and Sworn  
16 Statement that you submitted with your  
17 application as a part of the record of your sworn  
18 testimony?

19 MS. DEAN: I do not object.

20 (EXHIBIT NO. 4 MARKED FOR  
21 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (15 pages)  
22 PDQ - Elnora Jones Dean)  
23 (EXHIBIT NO. 5 MARKED FOR  
24 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)  
25 Sworn Statement - Elnora Jones

1 Dean)

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: I am pausing just a moment so that  
3 staff can do that. Ms. Dean, the Judicial  
4 Selection Commission has thoroughly investigated  
5 your qualifications for the bench. Our inquiry  
6 has focused on the nine evaluative criteria and  
7 has included a ballot box survey, a thorough  
8 study of your application materials, verification  
9 of your compliance with state ethics laws, a  
10 search of newspaper articles in which your name  
11 appears, a study of any previous screenings, and  
12 a check for economic conflicts of interest. We  
13 have received no affidavits filed in opposition  
14 to your election and no witnesses are present to  
15 testify. I'm going to recognize now staff  
16 counsel to ask you some questions. And in the  
17 conclusion of it all, I'll give you an  
18 opportunity, after the questions have been asked,  
19 to offer any brief statement you'd like to make  
20 at that time. Do you understand all of that?

21 MS. DEAN: Yes.

22 MS. BENSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 EXAMINATION

24 BY MS. BENSON:

25 Q. Ms. Dean, would you please state for the record the

1           **city and the circuit in which you reside?**

2           A.    The city is Columbia.  The circuit is the 11th  
3           Circuit.

4           MS. BENSON:  Mr. Chairman, I note, for the record,  
5                    that based on the testimony contained in the  
6                    candidate's PDQ which has been included in the  
7                    record with the candidate's consent, Ms. Dean  
8                    meets the statutory requirements for this  
9                    position regarding age, residence and years of  
10                  practice.

11          **Q.    Ms. Dean, why do you want to serve as a family court**  
12          **judge, and why do you feel that your legal and**  
13          **professional experience qualify and will assist you to**  
14          **be an effective judge?**

15          A.    Since I've been an attorney, my passion in the legal  
16                  profession has been in family court.  I've primarily  
17                  practiced in family court for the more than 28 years  
18                  that I've been licensed.  During that time in family  
19                  court, I believe I've practiced in every area,  
20                  divorce, custody, child support, juveniles, child  
21                  neglect.  There are other ones, but I believe I've had  
22                  experience in each one.  I enjoy -- I've enjoyed  
23                  helping people.  I believe that now, with this amount  
24                  of experience and time in the profession and with  
25                  family court, that I can use that knowledge and

1 experience in a different way by being on the bench.  
2 I think I would be able to utilize what I've learned  
3 and what I've -- what I've practiced to be able to  
4 make judgments on the same type cases that I've been  
5 litigating.

6 **Q. Ms. Dean, are there any areas of the law for which you**  
7 **would need additional preparation in order to serve as**  
8 **family court judge, and how would you handle getting**  
9 **that additional preparation?**

10 A. I don't believe, currently, there's any additional  
11 preparation I would need because of my experience.  
12 But we participate in continuing legal education every  
13 year, so I know there's new things to learn as I  
14 continue on in the practice, and that's what I would  
15 do, just take every opportunity to read new cases that  
16 come out and rulings that come out, participate in  
17 legal -- continuing legal education and those type  
18 things.

19 **Q. Thank you. Ms. Dean, you have already described, to**  
20 **some extent, your experience, but could you also**  
21 **elaborate a little bit more about handling conflicts,**  
22 **contested family court matters, and specifically,**  
23 **discuss your experience with the financial aspect of**  
24 **family court work?**

25 A. Well, I'll start with divorce. With divorce, I've

1 represented many litigants in divorce. Oftentimes,  
2 retirement, 401Ks are issues, property -- real  
3 property, personal property, those items have to be  
4 valued. Oftentimes, they're contested. I've been to  
5 trial on those issues where we've had to call in  
6 appraisers and financial specialists to testify as to  
7 the value of different property. As far as custody,  
8 I've represented litigants in custody cases where  
9 they've been highly contested for different reasons,  
10 custody cases between parents, custody cases between  
11 parents and grandparents, custody cases between  
12 married individuals and unmarried individuals. As far  
13 as juvenile cases, I've also had trials with  
14 juveniles. While representing the juveniles, I've had  
15 occasions, when I was a solicitor for the 11th Circuit  
16 several years ago where I prosecuted juveniles. I  
17 have represented juveniles in waiver hearings. I've  
18 represented people on child support. Those cases are  
19 usually not that complex, but sometimes, they become  
20 complex when the litigant does not have a job where  
21 they're getting paid a salary or they work for  
22 themselves. And oftentimes, you have to find their  
23 income and that -- oftentimes, those cases go to  
24 contested hearings as well. And I think that covers  
25 it. I mean, anything in a divorce, I've been able to

1 represent a litigant in, I think, on all types of  
2 issues. As far as financial issues, as I discussed,  
3 you have military pensions, other pensions at private  
4 companies, state retirement, other types of 401Ks.  
5 I've had experience with all those types of values.

6 Q. Thank you. Ms. Dean, the Commission received 183  
7 ballot box surveys regarding you and 31 had additional  
8 comments. The ballot box survey contained the follows  
9 positive comments. Ms. Dean would bring a strong  
10 measure of common sense and balance to the family  
11 court bench. She is approachable, respectful and has  
12 the ability to communicate clearly with a wide range  
13 of individuals who appear before family court. Her  
14 diverse legal background, including experience in  
15 divorce, juvenile justice, child welfare and  
16 representing victims of domestic abuse provides her  
17 with a broad perspective necessary to address the  
18 complex issues families face. Another says, Serving  
19 as a family court judge requires empathy, perseverance  
20 and a steadfast commitment to fairness. Ms. Dean  
21 exemplifies these qualities and also has a  
22 determination to do what is right for South Carolina's  
23 families and children. And another, her quiet  
24 strength, balanced temperament and strong sense of  
25 integrity will serve the judicial system well. Ms.

1           Dean, three of the 31 written comments expressed  
2           concerns regarding preparation, communication and  
3           knowledge. These concerns did not indicate a pattern.  
4           Ms. Dean, would you want to make any response about  
5           these three concerns?

6       A.    Only thing I would say is that without specifics, I  
7           wouldn't really know how to respond. I believe I'm  
8           prepared whenever I go to court. I work hard to be  
9           prepared when I go to court, because one, I want to  
10          look good in front of my client, as well as look good  
11          in front of the judges, because you don't want a  
12          reputation for being someone who's not prepared. So I  
13          try my best to be prepared whenever I come to court.  
14          As far as communication, I communicate with everybody.  
15          It doesn't matter whether it is a pro se litigant or  
16          an attorney. An attorney's always going to be younger  
17          than me. I try to treat everybody the same. So I'm  
18          not sure what someone would mean when they say don't  
19          communicate, because I believe I do communicate pretty  
20          well with people. And what was the third one?

21       **Q.    It says knowledge, knowledge, experience and ethics.**

22       A.    I've been practicing, now 28 1/2 years and the  
23          majority of that has been in family court. I satisfied  
24          my CLE requirement. Most of the CLEs that I attend  
25          are family court related. So I believe I do have the

1 experience and the knowledge to be a family court  
2 judge. As far as ethics, I work hard to treat  
3 everybody the way I would want to be treated, and I do  
4 it honestly. I don't -- like I said, without a  
5 specific incident, I don't know why that comment  
6 would've been made.

7 **Q. Thank you. Ms. Dean, your PDQ listed that you've been**  
8 **involved in three lawsuits. The first one was in**  
9 **2022. You were sued by a client's child in a probate**  
10 **matter, and that case ultimately was dismissed. Is**  
11 **there any information you'd like to add about that**  
12 **case?**

13 **A.** I would just briefly say the person who sued me was  
14 the son of my client, and my client was an heir to her  
15 sister's estate. And the case was dismissed in  
16 circuit court.

17 **Q. Thank you. Ms. Dean, the second lawsuit was from 2020**  
18 **in which you were the plaintiff in a partition action**  
19 **against your ex-husband, and that case was settled out**  
20 **of court. Is there anything that you would like to**  
21 **add about that particular case?**

22 **A.** I would just say we were joint owners to a piece of  
23 property and the partition action was filed because I  
24 wasn't -- that was the only way I was able to get my  
25 name off of the financing on it. It was financed in

1 both names and it wasn't refinanced or sold at the  
2 agreed upon time period and so I had to file that  
3 action to push that matter along so that it wouldn't  
4 affect my credit score or any business that I wanted  
5 to engage in.

6 **Q. And the third lawsuit was also from 2022. You were**  
7 **the plaintiff in a breach of action against a**  
8 **contractor who was supposed to build a deck on your**  
9 **home, and you were awarded \$1800 against the**  
10 **defendant. Is there anything else you would add about**  
11 **that particular lawsuit?**

12 **A.** That was a lawsuit I filed after many attempts to get  
13 the contractor to come back to repair the deck. It  
14 was a deck that he built on the back of my house. And  
15 shortly after he built it, maybe within days, it  
16 started falling apart. I could not get him to come  
17 back. So after about six or eight months or so,  
18 that's when I filed the lawsuit to kind of encourage  
19 him to either come back and fix the deck or to pay me  
20 money back that I had paid him. And he didn't do  
21 either, so the judgment was prepared against him.

22 **Q. Ms. Dean, the SLED report listed one additional**  
23 **lawsuit from 2019. You were named as one of very many**  
24 **defendants in this particular case, which was**  
25 **ultimately dismissed. Whenever you did some further**

1 research about the -- at first, whenever I mentioned  
2 this case to you, you did not recognize the  
3 plaintiff's name. But then in doing some further  
4 research, you found that you had represented the  
5 plaintiff's wife in their divorce, and at the time you  
6 were representing the wife, the plaintiff was using a  
7 different name. Is there any other information that  
8 you would add about this lawsuit?

9 A. No, there's no other information. I was never served  
10 with that lawsuit.

11 Q. Thank you. Ms. Dean how would you handle a potential  
12 conflict of interest involving conflicts of interest  
13 involving you or a member of your family?

14 A. If I were a judge, I wouldn't hear cases that were  
15 involving a member of my family.

16 Q. Ms. Dean, you list in your PDQ that you're a member of  
17 the board of directors of the Brookland Federal Credit  
18 Union, which is based with the Brookland Baptist  
19 Church. If you were elected as a family court judge,  
20 what would you do concerning this position?

21 A. I would resign the position. I wouldn't want to give  
22 the impression that I was impartial to any member of  
23 Brookland or anybody who was a member of the credit  
24 union, so I would resign that position.

25 Q. Do you foresee any potential conflicts coming up

1           **because you've held this position? And if you do, how**  
2           **would you handle such conflicts?**

3           A.    The only potential conflict I would see coming up is  
4           if another member of the board came before me. And if  
5           that were -- of the current board came before me or  
6           the board while I was a member of the board of  
7           directors, and then I would recuse myself from hearing  
8           that person's case.

9           **Q.    Thank you.**

10          MS. BENSON: I would note that the Midlands Citizen  
11          Committee found Ms. Dean qualified in the  
12          evaluative criteria of constitutional  
13          qualifications, physical health and mental  
14          stability, and well qualified in the evaluative  
15          criteria of ethical fitness, professional and  
16          academic ability, character, reputation,  
17          experience and judicial temperament. The  
18          Committee commented, she had done it all in the  
19          family court arena. Impressed with her  
20          experience and knowledge of family court matters,  
21          and she is a very strong candidate.

22          **Q.    Ms. Dean, just a few housekeeping issues. The JMSC**  
23          **Procedural Rule 17 includes a prohibition of any**  
24          **candidate from attending or watching any portion of**  
25          **the livestream recordings of the public hearings of**

1           this cycle until all the hearings are concluded. Have  
2           you watched or listened to any of these hearings  
3           before your appearance today?

4       A.    No, ma'am.

5       Q.    Has any other person relayed any information about any  
6           of the proceedings before this Commission to you?

7       A.    No, ma'am.

8       Q.    Ms. Dean, are you aware that as a judicial candidate,  
9           you are bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct as found  
10          in Rule 501 of the South Carolina Appellate Court  
11          Rules?

12      A.    Yes.

13      Q.    And since submitting your letter of intent, have you  
14          contacted any members of the commission about your  
15          candidacy?

16      A.    No.

17      Q.    Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70 of South  
18          Carolina Code including the limitations on contacting  
19          members of the General Assembly regarding your  
20          screening?

21      A.    Yes.

22      Q.    Since submitting your letter of intent, have you  
23          sought or received a pledge of any legislator, either  
24          prior to this date or pending the outcome of your  
25          screening?

1 A. No, I haven't.

2 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members of  
3 the General Assembly on your behalf or are you aware  
4 of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
5 your behalf?

6 A. No, I haven't, and I'm not aware of anybody  
7 intervening on my behalf.

8 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the Commission  
9 guidelines on pledging in South Carolina Code Section  
10 2-19-70(e)?

11 A. Yes.

12 MS. BENSON: Mr. Chairman, I would just note, for the  
13 record, that any concerns raised during the  
14 investigation regarding this candidate were  
15 incorporated into the questioning today. Mr.  
16 Chairman, I have no further questions.

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, ma'am. Ms. Dean, could  
18 you tell me whether or not there are any other  
19 equity partners in your law practice?

20 MS. DEAN: There are not.

21 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Okay, thank you. Senator Walker.

22 SENATOR WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good  
23 morning to you, Ms. Dean.

24 MS. DEAN: Good morning.

25 SENATOR WALKER: It's good to see you. Firstly, let

1 me just, you know, commend you on what I would  
2 call a very stellar legal career. You have spent  
3 at least 25 years in the family court system, I'm  
4 assuming, and that comes after you two to three  
5 years you were working as a solicitor. And to --  
6 it takes a special person, you know, to practice,  
7 you know, in family court and I think you would  
8 agree that family court is probably our most  
9 tempestuous or turbulent, you know, venue for  
10 adjudicating cases, you know, in our system of  
11 jurisprudence. And you've done it for more than  
12 two decades. And I think you have made a very  
13 strong case for yourself, as far as, you know,  
14 becoming or ascending to the bench. You know,  
15 you're not someone who decided she wanted to be a  
16 family court judge and you don't have any  
17 experience practicing in that court. As you've  
18 stated earlier, I mean, you have pretty much  
19 touched on almost every issue imaginable before  
20 the family court. And so again, I just want to  
21 commend you for your experience. I would also  
22 say, you know, to the naysayers or critics about  
23 your level of preparation, you have been on the  
24 opposite side of cases from me. And I remember  
25 during my time as a city prosecutor and you would

1 come into city court representing clients, and  
2 I've always found you to be prepared, even  
3 keeled, and you had a good feel for cases and you  
4 were realistic, and you didn't ask for things  
5 that were unreasonable. At the same time, you  
6 advocated zealously on behalf of your clients.  
7 And also, during my times as a city judge, I  
8 recall you coming into my courtroom and you were  
9 just the same. And this is for the group's  
10 edification, but for anyone that -- if you had  
11 concerns about Ms. Dean's, I guess, personal or  
12 professional scruples or ethics, what I can tell  
13 you or share with you is a recent experience that  
14 I had with her. I was attending, I believe it  
15 was, the Richland County Bar's judicial  
16 reception. And I walked up to a group and Ms.  
17 Dean was in that group. And she walked away. I  
18 didn't know why she walked away. In fact, I  
19 asked some of our mutual friends, Is everything  
20 okay with Elnora? Did I do something to her?  
21 Well, it was because she was aware that I was on  
22 JMSC and she was more familiar with the rule  
23 about inappropriate contact with members of the  
24 Commission than I was. And so, initially, like I  
25 said, before I found that out, I thought I'd done

1 something wrong, maybe I had offended her. But  
2 she was actually going out of her way to ensure  
3 that she was complying with the rules of this  
4 commission. So in the event if there is anyone  
5 out there that has questions about, you know,  
6 your ethics or your personal, professional  
7 rectitude, I hope that's an example or that's  
8 something that, you know, that we can look to as  
9 proof that you are someone who subscribes to, you  
10 know, and imposing upon yourself very high  
11 ethical standards. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 MS. DEAN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. Ms. Dean, let me  
14 ask you one -- excuse me -- one clarification  
15 question. I noticed in your Letters of  
16 Recommendation, which are all positive, the one  
17 letter from Ms. Jane Waters was dated August 21,  
18 2024. Could you confirm that that's probably --  
19 I know you didn't write the letter, but that's  
20 probably a typo, because it should've been 2025;  
21 is that right?

22 MS. DEAN: Yes, that's probably a typo on her part,  
23 because she would've written it this year. And  
24 I'm sorry I didn't catch that, but that would be  
25 a typo.

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Okay, and I appreciate that.  
2 That's consistent with the date of the other  
3 letters. I just wanted to make sure that, in all  
4 likelihood, you had asked for the letters, or  
5 however the letters were procured, that was all  
6 done in this screening cycle.

7 MS. DEAN: That's right.

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Do other members have questions  
9 for Ms. Dean? All right. Seeing none then, Ms.  
10 Dean, I don't have any other questions for you.  
11 I appreciate your patience in our delaying  
12 getting to you this morning. But this will  
13 conclude this portion of the screening process. I  
14 do need to take this opportunity, though, to  
15 remind you that pursuant to the Commission's  
16 evaluative criteria, the Commission expects  
17 candidates to follow the letter, as well as the  
18 spirit of our state's ethics laws, and we will  
19 view violations or the appearance of impropriety  
20 as serious and potentially deserving of very  
21 heavy weight in our screening deliberations. And  
22 on that note, as you know, the record will remain  
23 open until the formal release of the report of  
24 qualifications and were there such a need, you  
25 could be called back to have a discussion about

1           whatever that issue might be, again, if that were  
2           to arise. Do you understand all of that?

3 MS. DEAN: Yes, sir. And Representative Caskey, if I  
4           could, I'd just like to take this opportunity to  
5           thank the Commission for allowing me to appear  
6           virtually. Thank you for accommodating me. I  
7           intended to be there in person. Unfortunately, I  
8           had to have surgery last week and I'm not mobile  
9           right now, so I definitely appreciate this  
10          Commission accommodating that.

11 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Well, I appreciate you keeping me  
12          honest, because I had told you at the outset that  
13          I was going to give you an opportunity to say  
14          that, or whatever you chose to say. And I came  
15          off that, so I appreciate you taking that  
16          opportunity. If you'd like to say anything else,  
17          we'll be happy to hear from you. Otherwise, we  
18          will wish you well and a speedy recovery.

19 MS. DEAN: Thank you. I don't have anything else.

20 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Right. Have a great day. Thank  
21          you very much.

22 MS. DEAN: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. We will move now  
24          directly to our next candidate screening. We  
25          will stand at ease until the candidate is in the

1 room with us.

2 (OFF THE RECORD)

3 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right, ladies and gentlemen,  
4 we will go back on the record and proceed with  
5 the screening of the next candidate who is with  
6 us in the room. Ms. West, if you'll come to the  
7 podium. Before us, we have Rebecca West, who is  
8 a candidate for Seat 4 in the 11th Judicial  
9 Circuit on the family court bench. Ms. West, if  
10 you will please raise your right hand.

11 WHEREUPON:

12 REBECCA RUTH BROWN WEST, being duly sworn  
13 and cautioned to speak the truth, the whole truth  
14 and nothing but the truth, testifies as follows:

15 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, ma'am. If you would,  
16 please, state your full name for the record.

17 MS. WEST: Rebecca Ruth Brown West.

18 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Ms. West, there should be some  
19 documents in front of you. If you'd take a  
20 moment to review those.

21 MS. WEST: Yes, sir.

22 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Are those the Personal Data  
23 Questionnaire and the Sworn Statement that you've  
24 submitted with your application materials?

25 MS. WEST: They are.

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Are there any changes or updates  
2 that need to be made?

3 MS. WEST: None that -- other than what I have already  
4 submitted to the Commission.

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Do you have any  
6 objection to our including those into the record?

7 MS. WEST: Not at all.

8 (EXHIBIT NO. 6 MARKED FOR  
9 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (21 pages)  
10 PDQ - Rebecca West)

11 (EXHIBIT NO. 7 MARKED FOR  
12 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (9 pages)  
13 Sworn Statement - Rebecca West)

14 (EXHIBIT NO. 8 MARKED FOR  
15 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (2 pages)  
16 Amendment - Rebecca West)

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Let me give the staff  
18 just a moment to do that. The Judicial Merit  
19 Selection Commission has thoroughly investigated  
20 your qualifications for the bench. Our inquiry  
21 has focused on the nine evaluative criteria and  
22 has included a ballot box survey, a thorough  
23 study of your application materials, verification  
24 of your compliance with state ethics laws, a  
25 search for newspaper articles in which your name

1 appears, a study of any previous screenings, and  
2 a check for economic conflicts of interest. We  
3 have received no affidavits in opposition to your  
4 election and no witnesses are present to testify.  
5 I'd be happy to recognize you for any brief  
6 statement. Otherwise, I would turn to staff  
7 counsel to begin with some questions.

8 MS. WEST: No need for a brief statement. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right.

10 EXAMINATION

11 BY MS. HALL:

12 **Q. Good morning, Ms. West, it's good to see you again.**

13 A. Good morning.

14 **Q. Please state for the record the city and the circuit**  
15 **in which you reside.**

16 A. I reside in the 11th Judicial Circuit and I live in  
17 Lexington County, Lexington, South Carolina.

18 MS. HALL: Mr. Chairman, I note, for the record, that  
19 based on the testimony contained in the  
20 candidate's PDQ, which has been included in the  
21 record with the candidate's consent, Rebecca West  
22 meets the statutory requirements for this  
23 position regarding age, residence and years of  
24 practice.

25 **Q. Ms. West, why do you want to serve as a family court**

1           **judge, and why do you feel that your legal and**  
2           **professional experience qualify and will assist you to**  
3           **be an effective judge?**

4    A.    Thank you.  As I've stated in my submission so far, I  
5           believe that public service is absolutely required of  
6           those people who have the skill set and the  
7           temperament to serve.  And I believe that my skill set  
8           and my experience, my knowledge of the law, especially  
9           in family court, and my temperament are particularly  
10          well suited for the judgeship that I'm seeking.

11   **Q.    Ms. West, are there any additional areas of the law**  
12          **for which you would need additional preparation in**  
13          **order to serve as family court judge, and how would**  
14          **you handle getting that additional preparation?**

15    A.    Thank you.  I have no experience in juvenile justice.  
16          In preparation for an application for this position, I  
17          have, of course, reviewed the statute.  I have also  
18          been mindful, as I always am, of reading the advance  
19          sheets and the published opinions, and so forth, in  
20          that area.  My knowledge of rules and trial practice  
21          would certainly come in handy in that process.  But if  
22          honored to serve and chosen to serve, I would observe  
23          more court proceedings in that area as well to make  
24          sure that I'm familiar with the process and certainly  
25          the law.

1 Q. Thank you. Please briefly describe your experience in  
2 handling complex contested family court matters and  
3 specifically discuss your experience with the  
4 financial aspects of family court work.

5 A. This is an area that I'm particularly interested in  
6 and have grown interested in as my practice has grown  
7 and gotten older. I have a great deal of experience  
8 dealing with consulting experts and testifying experts  
9 in all areas of family court financial issues, such as  
10 retirement, division of retirement assets, the way  
11 people earn their money and how they generate income  
12 and streams of income. I'm also very familiar with  
13 business valuation and have worked with experts both  
14 in trial and consulting in order to present that --  
15 those facts and understand and educate myself for  
16 presentation purposes in trial. It's just generally  
17 an area of interest, but I think it also suits my  
18 tendency towards detail and preparation, which I pride  
19 myself in, and I enjoy getting down in the weeds, so  
20 to speak. And as I stated in my application, the  
21 ability to synthesize complex information and  
22 voluminous information in order to present a story, I  
23 think is critical in any trial practice. Also, from a  
24 -- from the standpoint of a judge, it is absolutely  
25 imperative to understand the terminology and to

1 understand the law in those areas, and I certainly do.  
2 But I think that's something that you can't learn or  
3 fully understand on the fly. You've got to know that  
4 going in. And I would be ready on day one for those  
5 issues.

6 Q. Thank you. The Commission received 291 ballot box  
7 surveys regarding you with 42 additional comments.  
8 The ballot box survey, for example, contain the  
9 following positive comments: Rebecca is an outstanding  
10 candidate for the family court bench. Highly  
11 intelligent, excellent experience, great temperament.  
12 She will have no learning curve and will be an  
13 invaluable asset to the family court. And Ms. West  
14 would be a welcomed asset to the family court bench.  
15 She has a lengthy successful career in family court  
16 with above average skill in trial work and appellate  
17 work. Two of the written comments expressed some  
18 concern. Both comments expressed concern about your  
19 ability to remain impartial. What response would you  
20 offer to this concern?

21 A. Well, first of all, any feedback like that is valuable  
22 and I certainly welcome the opportunity to improve.  
23 It's critical that we do that all the time in our  
24 practice and certainly on the bench, if given that  
25 opportunity. I'm very aware and have you reviewed,

1 not just in anticipation of today, but upon receiving  
2 those comments, Canon 3 of the Codes of Judicial  
3 Conduct and I'm committed to remaining impartial. I  
4 am also alert to how sometimes things that we do or  
5 say in our regular everyday life can give an  
6 appearance of impartiality, and it's so important that  
7 that never be put out there or allow people to even  
8 perceive that. And so to that end, I would, again,  
9 continue to be mindful and be very alert to how my  
10 actions appear to folks in public and how I conduct  
11 myself and my business.

12 **Q. Thank you, Ms. West. I would note that the Midlands**  
13 **Citizens Committee found Rebecca West to be qualified**  
14 **in the evaluative criteria of constitutional**  
15 **qualifications, physical health and mental stability.**  
16 **The Committee found her well qualified in the**  
17 **evaluative criteria of ethical fitness, professional**  
18 **and academic ability, character, reputation,**  
19 **experience and judicial temperament. The Committee**  
20 **stated, in summary, She is very impressive and will be**  
21 **a great addition to the judicial system.**  
22 **Knowledgeable in all matters except for the DJJ area.**  
23 **She is a real advocate for her clients and the family**  
24 **court. The Committee finds her to be an excellent**  
25 **candidate for the new family court seat. Just a few**

1 housekeeping issues now. JMSC Procedural Rule 17  
2 indicates a prohibition of any candidate from  
3 attending or watching any portion of the livestream or  
4 recordings of the public hearings of this cycle until  
5 all the hearings are concluded. Have you watched or  
6 listened to any of these hearings before your  
7 appearance today?

8 A. No, I have not.

9 Q. Has any other person relayed any information about any  
10 of the proceedings before this Commission to you?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Ms. West, are you aware that as a judicial candidate,  
13 you are bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct as found  
14 in Rule 501 of the South Carolina Appellate Court  
15 Rules?

16 A. I am.

17 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you  
18 contacted any members of the Commission about your  
19 candidacy?

20 A. I sent a letter -- I believe it was on Tuesday this  
21 week. I made a mistake, honestly. But in sending out  
22 my announcement card, I mistakenly left the labels of  
23 the General Assembly members on those envelopes and  
24 they went out. Those were the only individuals that I  
25 contacted. And again, I apologize for my error, and

1 it was certainly inadvertent. I also took steps to  
2 remedy that so that it would not happen again.

3 Q. And you also did update your PDQ to include that  
4 information?

5 A. Oh, absolutely. Yes, immediately.

6 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70 including the  
7 limitations on contacting members of the General  
8 Assembly regarding your screening?

9 A. I am.

10 Q. Since submitting your Letter of Intent, have you  
11 sought or received a pledge of any legislator, either  
12 prior to this date or pending the outcome of your  
13 screening?

14 A. No, ma'am.

15 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members of  
16 the General Assembly on your behalf or are you aware  
17 of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
18 your behalf?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the  
21 Commission's guidelines on pledging in SC Code Section  
22 2-19-70(e)?

23 A. I do.

24 MS. HALL: I would just note, for the record, that any  
25 concerns raised during the investigation

1           regarding the candidate were incorporated into  
2           the questioning of the candidate today. Mr.  
3           Chairman, I have no further questions.

4 CHAIRMAN CASKEY:       Members of the Commission have  
5           questions for Ms. West? Mr. Stegmaier?

6 MR. STEGMAIER: Ms. West, good afternoon.

7 MS. WEST: Yes.

8 MR. STEGMAIER:       Or good morning. I'll get it right.  
9           I hope you are well.

10 MS. WEST: Yes.

11 MR. STEGMAIER: I remember back in the day, this was  
12           about 15 years go, but we had a case together.

13 MS. WEST: We did.

14 MR. STEGMAIER:       And I wanted to just express my -- I  
15           was impressed by the way you handled that matter.  
16           And I remember it was very old school. It was a  
17           premises case or some such thing and we were --  
18           we had parties that were wrangling. I think we  
19           ended up resolving the case after a lunch that  
20           you invited me to where we just talked about the  
21           case and got down to it and worked it out.

22 MS. WEST: Right.

23 MR. STEGMAIER:       And so that's -- that's always  
24           something that's resonated with me about the way  
25           you handled that matter. I know, thereafter,

1           that you engaged in a fair amount of mediation  
2           practice.

3 MS. WEST: I have.

4 MR. STEGMAIER:       So I'm interested to know how that  
5           mediation practice has shaped your thoughts and  
6           beliefs and your approaches as to how would you  
7           apply that to resolving the disputes in the  
8           family court.

9 MS. WEST: Thank you. I remember that too. So  
10          mediation -- I thought about this a lot in  
11          preparation for today. Mediation has certainly  
12          made me a better listener. It has made me a lot  
13          less quick to assume that my first impression  
14          about the person or the issues is accurate. And  
15          I tell people this all the time -- and apologize  
16          for being informal -- it taught me how to be  
17          quiet and to absorb information and certainly not  
18          be quick to assume. It's also made me better  
19          skilled at being firm without being abrasive to  
20          make sure that I've got the confidence of the  
21          parties that I'm mediating for and that I can  
22          garner their trust if for no other reason than  
23          they can feel comfortable expressing to me what  
24          they truly feel and feel like they've been heard,  
25          which I think is so often one of the major

1 complaints about the judiciary. And it is so  
2 important to be able to say your peace and to  
3 tell your -- tell your story, and especially so  
4 in family court. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Other members have questions?

6 Senator Rankin.

7 SENATOR RANKIN: And I appreciate that last exchange  
8 because that's been the theme of -- invariably,  
9 of folks that don't have a good sense of family  
10 court, aside from the results, perhaps, that  
11 drive people to their worst emotions, but you'd  
12 expect that perhaps -- yesterday, for example,  
13 effectively, if I could say, a person felt they  
14 were not heard. Though the record reflected it  
15 and despite the mechanism of that particular  
16 interaction with the court, they walked away  
17 years later still believing that they weren't  
18 heard. There's only so much you can do.

19 MS. WEST: Sure.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: But I have -- this season of  
21 screening family court judges, particularly, the  
22 litigants and the lawyers, and it be so amped up.  
23 Yesterday's judge in Charleston talked about just  
24 the incredible adversarial role or nature of this  
25 temporary hearing. And my question and charge

1 effectively, you know, suggestion to Judge  
2 Frazier how to help lower the temperature so that  
3 you really are not communicating so much to the  
4 lawyers, though you have to, but talking sense  
5 into the room that, hopefully, the litigants get  
6 the fact that peace is their friend, and it's  
7 going to come sooner or later. So how can you  
8 communicate that to parties?

9 MS. WEST: Well, I found, in my mediation practice,  
10 don't cut people off. Within the bounds of  
11 reasonableness, obviously, you've got to move  
12 things forward. You can't just let somebody talk  
13 and talk and talk. It's so important just to  
14 simply listen, make eye contact, as a question if  
15 necessary, and remain calm. People feed off of  
16 the leader or the mediator, the judge. They feed  
17 off of that energy and remaining calm is --  
18 that's my tendency anyway, but I think it's so  
19 important. It helps zap that negative and amped-  
20 up feeling out of the room and helps people  
21 understand that if they're calm, they communicate  
22 better. I'm always willing to listen. I'll be  
23 firm. There's no question that I wouldn't  
24 tolerate abusive language or inappropriate  
25 language at all. But that litigant -- those

1 lawyers need to know that I respect them and that  
2 I'm listening.

3 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Senator from Charleston.

4 SENATOR CAMPSEN: Thank you for your offering for this  
5 position, and you obviously have a lot of  
6 experience in the family court. And I think what  
7 you just said about listening, make sure that  
8 clients, parties, that are adverse to one  
9 another, know that you're listening is very  
10 important. But at the beginning of your  
11 presentation, you mentioned a -- some type of  
12 communication or letter you inadvertently sent to  
13 some members of the General Assembly and I missed  
14 that.

15 MS. WEST: Sure.

16 SENATOR CAMPSEN: Could you clarify or tell me what  
17 happened?

18 MS. WEST: Yes, sir. I had a printed announcement  
19 card simply announcing that I'm running for this  
20 position. It's got my photograph on it, my --  
21 where I'm from and what seat I'm running for, and  
22 then my contact information. It mentions nothing  
23 about my qualifications or any other matter, just  
24 simply photograph and what I'm running for. I  
25 printed envelopes from -- or labels, rather, from

1 the mail merge form that is available on the  
2 General Assembly website. And before mailing  
3 those out, I forgot to remove the labels for the  
4 six General Assembly members of the Commission.

5 SENATOR CAMPSEN: Oh, all right.

6 MS. WEST: And so those went out in the mail. I  
7 immediately. As soon as I figured out what had  
8 happened, I went to the post office, tried to get  
9 those back, and I was not successful. So the  
10 following morning, I immediately wrote a letter  
11 updating my PDQ explaining what happened and what  
12 I did to remedy that so it wouldn't happen again.

13 SENATOR CAMPSEN: Thank you.

14 MS. WEST: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: I would just note, for the record,  
16 that the mail piece that Ms. West referenced is  
17 located in the candidate folder in the file  
18 captioned West, Rebecca Amendment, and it shows  
19 there just as she described it, the photograph  
20 and the seat and contact information, so we  
21 appreciate that. Other questions from members of  
22 the commission? Ms. West, I have had the  
23 privilege to know you over the last decade or so.  
24 And it is great to be with you, because I've come  
25 to know your reputation. I obviously don't

1 practice law in the family court. But also being  
2 from Lexington, people freely share their  
3 opinions with me about all manner of things. And  
4 I will say it is invariably positive on your  
5 behalf, and I was pleased to see that reflected  
6 here in the ballot box survey. And I know Ms.  
7 Hall shared with you some of the positive  
8 comments, but if I could just take a moment to  
9 share some of the others, because, as I've been  
10 want to point out, people don't have to say nice  
11 things about you on the Internet. And behind the  
12 cloak of anonymity, they can say anything. And  
13 in your case, they chose to say things like,  
14 She's very knowledgeable, calm, soft spoken and  
15 always courteous and professional. Upholds the  
16 highest ethical standards, an asset to our  
17 profession, highly qualified -- a highly  
18 qualified attorney, but also, as someone who has  
19 spent her career and life in this county, has  
20 made family court a better place for both lawyers  
21 and litigants, demonstrates professionalism at  
22 all times, and I think that's a credit to the  
23 reputation that you have earned --

24 MS. WEST: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- in the course of your career.

1 And you should know that, regardless of how  
2 anything turns out, because from my perspective,  
3 when folks who are members of our profession  
4 conduct themselves in this way, it improves what  
5 sometimes can be a fraught or contentious  
6 relationship with the public who may  
7 misunderstand because, unfortunately, sometimes  
8 everyone is unable to, as the senator from Horry  
9 pointed out, listen as effectively as we want,  
10 and they can sometimes have grievances with  
11 lawyers. And when we have folks like yourself,  
12 you've done such a credible job, I think everyone  
13 is better served for that. So I appreciate that.

14 MS. WEST: Thank you. That's humbling to hear. Thank  
15 you.

16 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: So that will bring us to the  
17 conclusion of this portion of the screening  
18 process. I do need to take a moment to remind  
19 you that pursuant to the Commission's evaluative  
20 criteria, we take the letter, as well as the  
21 spirit of our state ethics laws very seriously,  
22 and we would view any violation or appearance of  
23 impropriety as very serious and potentially  
24 deserving of heavy weight in our screening  
25 deliberations. And on that note, as you know,

1 the record will remain open until the formal  
2 release of the qualifications report. And should  
3 there be a need, we would have the ability to  
4 call you back for discussion again if that  
5 circumstance were to present. Do you understand  
6 all that?

7 MS. WEST: I do.

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Wonderful. Thank you again for  
9 being here. Thank you for your patience with  
10 scheduling. I know we're a little bit behind.  
11 But wish you all the best for the rest of your  
12 day and hope you travel home safely.

13 MS. WEST: Thank you, appreciate it.

14 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: We will proceed with the screening  
15 of our next candidate and stand at ease until  
16 they are here with us in the room.

17 (OFF THE RECORD)

18 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Ladies and gentlemen, we will go  
19 back on the record and proceed with the  
20 screenings. Our next candidate, which is Judge  
21 Weidner, who is a candidate for Seat 3 on the  
22 14th Judicial Circuit's Family Court bench.  
23 Judge, do I have all that correct?

24 JUDGE WEIDNER: Yes, sir.

25 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. If you would, please,

1           sir, raise your right hand.

2   WHEREUPON:

3                   LARRY WAYNE WEIDNER, being duly sworn and  
4           cautioned to speak the truth, the whole truth and  
5           nothing but the truth, testifies as follows:

6   CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   All right, sir.  There should be  
7           some documents there in front of you.  If you'd  
8           just take a moment to review those?

9   JUDGE WEIDNER:  Yes, sir.  Yes, sir.

10   CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   Are those the Personal Data  
11           Questionnaire and the Sworn Statement that you  
12           have submitted as part of your application  
13           materials?

14   JUDGE WEIDNER:  Yes, sir.

15   CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   Are there any -- if you would,  
16           pull the microphone up a little bit.  We get  
17           candidates of all heights.  Do you have any  
18           changes or updates that need to be made to those?

19   JUDGE WEIDNER:  No, sir.

20   CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   Okay.  Do you have any objection  
21           to our including those in the record?

22   JUDGE WEIDNER:  No, sir.

23                                   (EXHIBIT NO. 9 MARKED FOR  
24                                   IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (21 pages)  
25                                   PDQ - The Honorable Larry W.

1 Weidner II)  
2 (EXHIBIT NO. 10 MARKED FOR  
3 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (10 pages)  
4 Sworn Statement - The Honorable  
5 Larry W. Weidner II)

6 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Let me give staff just  
7 a moment to do that. All right. The Judicial  
8 Merit Selection Commission has thoroughly  
9 investigated your qualifications for the bench.  
10 Our inquiry has focused on the nine evaluative  
11 criteria, included a ballot box survey, a  
12 thorough study of your application materials, a  
13 verification of your compliance with state ethics  
14 laws, a search of newspaper articles in which  
15 your name appears, a study of any previous  
16 screenings, and a check for economic conflicts of  
17 interest. We have received no affidavits in  
18 opposition to your election and no witnesses are  
19 present to testify. Before we go any further,  
20 though, I noticed that you were followed into the  
21 room by these lovely ladies. If you'd like to  
22 introduce them, we'd be happy to hear from you  
23 and meet them all.

24 JUDGE WEIDNER: Oh, thank you, sir. Yeah, I have  
25 three of the five most important ladies in my

1 world. I have my daughter Katie, Katherine; I  
2 have my wife of just one month shy of 37 years,  
3 Pam; and I have my mother Sue Weidner.

4 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Wonderful. Thank you all for  
5 being here. It's great to have you here today.  
6 So thank you. Judge, I'd be happy to recognize  
7 you. I know we're a little behind schedule and  
8 appreciate your patience. I'd be happy to  
9 recognize you for any brief statement you'd like  
10 to make. Otherwise, I'll refer to staff counsel  
11 for questions to get things going.

12 JUDGE WEIDNER: I appreciate that. I'm -- we should  
13 probably press, because I know you're trying to  
14 make up time.

15 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Ms. Trask.

16 EXAMINATION

17 BY MS. TRASK:

18 **Q. Good morning.**

19 A. Good morning.

20 **Q. Judge Weidner, please state for the record the city  
21 and the circuit in which you reside?**

22 A. I live in Bluffton. It's the 14th Judicial Circuit.

23 MS. TRASK: Mr. Chairman, I note, for the record, that  
24 based on the testimony contained in the  
25 candidate's PDQ which has been included in the

1 record with the candidate's consent, Larry Wayne  
2 Weidner, II, meets the statutory requirements for  
3 this position regarding age, residence and years  
4 of practice.

5 **Q. Judge Weidner, why do you want to serve as a family**  
6 **court judge, and why do you feel that your legal and**  
7 **professional experience qualify and will assist you to**  
8 **be an effective judge?**

9 A. Well, I've given that a lot of thought. And when I  
10 was filling out the PDQ information, I realized that  
11 I'd built something of a record of public service.  
12 Not intentionally, but that's just, I guess, the way  
13 I'm wired. So I've served as, you know, an officer in  
14 the Marine Corps. I've served as a reserve police  
15 officer. I've served on the boards of the Child Abuse  
16 Prevention Association and the boards of the Kiwanis  
17 Club. I served as the judge advocate for the American  
18 Veterans Post 70. I've worked a lot with Disabled  
19 American Veterans. I'm a life member. I've been a  
20 member of the chambers in my area for -- since I got  
21 out of the Marine Corps. So I think I'm kind of wired  
22 for service. And this is an opportunity to serve.  
23 And really, it's an opportunity to serve those that  
24 I'm most interested in serving, which is children. I  
25 think children are our most valuable asset. I think

1 we need to preserve and protect and defend and lead  
2 them. And the family court is the only court that  
3 does that. You don't touch, really, children's issues  
4 in magistrates court or in probate court or in the  
5 master's court, circuit court, or the appellate  
6 courts. But family court judges are making decisions  
7 almost hourly about children, and their decisions fix  
8 the trajectory of their lives. And I think it's super  
9 important. And that's really what I want to do. And  
10 then I like being in court. I mean, I've been a trial  
11 lawyer -- my entire career I've been a trial lawyer.  
12 I like being in court. When I'm in court, I'm  
13 challenged and I like to watch good lawyers practice  
14 law. I learn from them. So yeah, I like being in  
15 court. And this is an opportunity to be in court  
16 every day. And then my professional training, I've  
17 covered every area. In the family court, I've done  
18 DJJ, abuse and neglect, alimony, TPR and adoption, you  
19 know, division of assets and debts, custody,  
20 visitation, support. I've hit every one of those  
21 areas. I've mediated hundreds of cases. And now, I'm  
22 a magistrate, so I've been in the big chair making  
23 some decisions, so I think I know what I'm getting  
24 into. So I think that all of that prepares me  
25 professionally to do what I'm asking to be allowed to

1 do.

2 Q. Thank you. And you kind of touched on this, but Judge  
3 Weidner, are there any areas of the law for which you  
4 would need additional preparation in order to serve as  
5 a family court judge and how would you handle that  
6 additional preparation?

7 A. If you had asked me that three hours ago, I would've  
8 probably said abuse and neglect. And then my wife  
9 reminded me that I just had a case where mom had  
10 alleged abuse and neglect to get a tactical advantage  
11 over dad, and I had to deal with all of that and I  
12 reread all the law. So I think I could probably pick  
13 up a file and walk in in any large subject matter area  
14 of the law in family court and try a case. And in  
15 every one of those, I think it would take -- I would  
16 always go look it up. I mediated a case on Tuesday  
17 that had very complex issues. It was a large estate.  
18 It had issues with transmutation that I could see  
19 coming. So I broke out Stuckey's book and looked up  
20 some cases and got myself prepared. And that's pretty  
21 much the way I do business. Whether I'm mediating,  
22 whether I'm on the bench as a magistrate, I try to get  
23 out in front of a case, see if I think there are some  
24 issues that are going to be coming up, and get brushed  
25 up on all of those, even if I've done them a hundred

1 times. So I think we all have to just study, get  
2 prepared.

3 **Q. Thank you. And you've now kind of touched on this**  
4 **question as well. But Judge Weidner, please briefly**  
5 **describe your experience in handling complex contested**  
6 **family court matters. And specifically discuss your**  
7 **experience with the financial assets of family court**  
8 **work.**

9 **A.** Well, I've got a degree in economics. I've owned  
10 small businesses over the years, so I know how things  
11 work in small businesses. Down in our area, if you  
12 get a case off of Hilton Head, chances are it's --  
13 easily, the house alone is a million-dollar house, so  
14 you're dealing with large assets. So I've done -- I  
15 mean, that's pretty much what I do is get involved  
16 with large asset divisions. I mean, obviously, there  
17 are smaller assets too. But that's kind of the bread  
18 and butter down where we are. There's a lot of large  
19 asset division, we have to get into that. If it's got  
20 a business, then you're looking at cashflows and  
21 valuation of business, which can get into a big fight.  
22 I've done all of that for years -- like for my career.  
23 So I've done it a lot.

24 **Q. Judge Weidner, the Commission received 171 ballot box**  
25 **survey regarding you with 20 additional comments. The**

1 ballot box survey, for example, contain the following  
2 positive comments: Excellent and well rounded  
3 candidate. Also is very familiar with military  
4 matters, which is very helpful in family court. And  
5 Larry Weidner would be an excellent family court  
6 judge. He has a great legal mind, is respectful and  
7 courteous to everyone, adheres diligently and  
8 consistently to high legal and personal ethical  
9 principles and possesses a strong sense of fairness.  
10 None of the written comments expressed concerns.  
11 Judge Weidner, you noted in our PDQ several lawsuits.  
12 The first lawsuit listed was from 2001, South Carolina  
13 Department of Transportation versus Larry W. Weidner,  
14 et al, was filed as a result of a condemnation action.  
15 Please explain the nature and disposition of this  
16 lawsuit.

17 A. The state came in and took a three-foot -- really, one  
18 meter wide strip off the back of my property that  
19 widened the road. Got resolved, no problem.

20 Q. The next lawsuit listed, which was also noted on your  
21 SLED report, was William Schwartz, et al, versus  
22 Circle Supply, et al, in 2002. And you previously  
23 noted that you were never served with this matter nor  
24 did you file in this matter, which is listed as  
25 withdrawn or settled on June 23rd, 2024; is that

1 correct?

2 A. Yes. Somebody with my name is listed as one of the  
3 plaintiffs. I don't know. It's not me. I wasn't a  
4 plaintiff in anything. And I -- my dad had the same  
5 name, but he would have talked to me about it, so I  
6 don't think that's a Larry Weidner that's me or  
7 related to me. I don't know anything about that.

8 Q. You also noted three cases that reflect the entry of  
9 transcripts of judgment, which you believe were the  
10 result of entry of judgment for attorney's fees in  
11 favor of your law firm. Those were all three entered  
12 and ended on August 28th, 2007. Is that accurate?

13 A. Yes, ma'am.

14 Q. In 2008, you listed that you were the plaintiff in the  
15 case of Larry W. Weidner, II, versus Don Aldrich.  
16 Please explain the nature the disposition of this  
17 lawsuit.

18 A. I was riding my road bike, bicycle, and I had a  
19 distracted golf cart driver who took me out and we got  
20 that resolved.

21 Q. In your PDQ, you noted -- you note that you were  
22 listed in a 2009 case, Selena Barksdale versus MEI,  
23 LLC, et al. Please explain the nature and disposition  
24 of that lawsuit.

25 A. So I represented the wife in that. And her husband --

1 it was a foreclosure action, or a lien against her  
2 husband and the company. I represented the wife in  
3 the divorce and somehow they put me down as a  
4 defendant. I wasn't a defendant. I was the defense  
5 counsel.

6 Q. And finally, you noted that you were a plaintiff in  
7 the case of Larry W. Weidner, II, versus Wade Lawrence  
8 and Christina Lawrence in 2018 for a rule to vacate,  
9 which was dismissed on February 20th, 2018. Is that  
10 accurate?

11 A. Yes, ma'am.

12 Q. Thank you, Judge. Weidner. How would you handle a  
13 potential conflict of interest involving you or a  
14 member of your family?

15 A. Recuse myself.

16 Q. Thank you. The Citizens Committee report -- I would  
17 note that the Low Country Citizen Committee found  
18 Judge Weidner qualified in the evaluative criteria of  
19 constitutional qualifications, physical health and  
20 mental stability. The Committee found him well  
21 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical  
22 fitness, professional and academic ability, character,  
23 reputation, experience and judicial temperament. The  
24 Committee stated in summary, Tremendous vigor,  
25 unflappable, even tempered, smart, considerate. His

1 deep military experience is a huge plus. Would make a  
2 great judge. I have a few housekeeping issues. JMSC  
3 Procedural Rule 17 includes a prohibition of any  
4 candidate from attending or watching any portion of  
5 any portion of the livestream or recordings of the  
6 public hearings of this cycle until after all hearings  
7 are concluded. Have you watched or listened to any of  
8 these hearings before your appearance today?

9 A. No, ma'am.

10 Q. Has any other person relayed any information about any  
11 of the proceedings before this Commission to you?

12 A. No, ma'am.

13 Q. Judge Weidner, are you aware that as a judicial  
14 candidate, you are bound by the Code of Judicial  
15 Conduct as found in Rule 501 of the South Carolina  
16 Appellate Court Rules?

17 A. Yes, ma'am.

18 Q. Judge Weidner, since submitting your Letter of Intent,  
19 have you contacted any members of the Commission about  
20 your candidacy?

21 A. No, ma'am.

22 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70, including the  
23 limitations on contacting members of the General  
24 Assembly regarding your screening?

25 A. I have not contacted anyone, no, ma'am.

1 Q. Are you familiar with that section?

2 A. Yes, ma'am, I am.

3 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you  
4 sought or received a pledge of any legislator, either  
5 prior to this date or pending the outcome of your  
6 screening?

7 A. No, ma'am.

8 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members of  
9 the General Assembly on your behalf or are you aware  
10 of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
11 your behalf?

12 A. No, ma'am.

13 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the  
14 Commission's guidelines on pledging in South Carolina  
15 Code Section 2-19-70(e)?

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. TRASK: I would just note, for the record, that  
18 any concerns raised during the investigation  
19 regarding the candidate were incorporated into  
20 the questioning of the candidate today. Mr.  
21 Chairman, I have no further questions.

22 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, ma'am. Do the members  
23 of the Commission have any questions? Mr.  
24 Stegmaier?

25 MR. STEGMAIER: Sir, good morning.

1 JUDGE WEIDNER: Good morning, sir.

2 MR. STEGMAIER: First and foremost, thank you for  
3 your service in the Marine Corps.

4 JUDGE WEIDNER: It was my honor.

5 MR. STEGMAIER: And so that is -- that experience  
6 and what was referenced in your presentation  
7 today about your understanding about military  
8 culture, as well as the legal part of it.  
9 Obviously, you're in Beaufort County, which has  
10 the air station on Paris Island. What has been  
11 your experience thus far with regard to your  
12 family court practice where you're dealing with  
13 folks that are in the Marine Corps and who are  
14 litigants? And kind of by extension, one of the  
15 running themes that have gone on during the  
16 course of the week with regard to the family  
17 court races is making sure litigants are heard,  
18 having their say and probably more importantly,  
19 understanding what is happening to them,  
20 especially with a military community where there  
21 are higher rates of divorce and child related  
22 issues, there's obviously a lot of emotion. What  
23 has been your practice as far as making sure that  
24 people get heard, making sure they understand  
25 what's happening to them as opposed to not.

1 JUDGE WEIDNER: Well, first of all, I speak fluent  
2 Marine and that helps. No, that's a real thing.  
3 I remember trying a case in front of Judge Fuge.  
4 And opposing counsel was also a Marine, a good  
5 friend of mine. The witness was a Marine. We  
6 got mixing it up and finally, Judge Fuge hammers  
7 his gavel and he says, Stop it. I haven't  
8 understood what's been said in my court in the  
9 last five minutes. And Marine will drop in and,  
10 you know, we started talking about TAD and BAQ,  
11 and this and that, and it can happen. And so I  
12 can, obviously, speak Marine and so I can explain  
13 things to my Marines and help them understand and  
14 work with them talk to them in a way that we just  
15 used to interact with each other in a certain  
16 particular way. I don't know how to describe it.  
17 Mr. Caskey can probably tell you about that.

18 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Not on the record.

19 JUDGE WEIDNER: But yeah, it's an important thing.  
20 And representing people, you've got to understand  
21 where they're coming from too. And particularly  
22 with Marines, if you haven't been in a gun club,  
23 you haven't lived it, so you haven't dealt with  
24 deployments and TAD trips and all of a sudden,  
25 you're here today and gone tomorrow, don't know

1 when you're coming back, and all those stressors  
2 that are very important to understand if you're  
3 dealing with a Marine family, because that's  
4 their world. And a lot of times, if you haven't  
5 lived in that world, you can't understand it.  
6 The other thing, and probably one of the biggest  
7 reasons I got into family law, was when I came  
8 out of the Marine Corps, I stayed in Beaufort and  
9 I realized that there weren't any Marines  
10 practicing family law, and there were -- they  
11 didn't understand how the Marine Corps world and  
12 the civilian world have to mesh. Because there  
13 are things that you can do that are unwise in the  
14 civilian world that will have an effect in the  
15 Marine world just like there are things in the  
16 Marine Corps world that you can do that makes  
17 sense to Marine Corps world that are not good for  
18 civilian world. And understanding how those two  
19 worlds have to work together or be meshed, is  
20 critical, I think, to representing Marines.  
21 Because I've seen it where a case could've gone a  
22 lot different if one of the counsel has really  
23 understood what they were doing was probably not  
24 the smart thing to do for a Marine.

25 MR. STEGMAIER: Thank you, sir.

1 JUDGE WEIDNER: Yes, sir.

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Senator from Horry.

3 SENATOR RANKIN: I'm curious, reading your PDQ, your  
4 serving as a judge effectively to divine between  
5 the warring parties. Do you think that your  
6 either participate in or coaching of rugby would  
7 be of any value here? And I want you to know  
8 that is a light, not too serious question.

9 JUDGE WEIDNER: No, and I'm trying to give you an  
10 answer that could go into the record.

11 SENATOR RANKIN: I could just visualize pulling the  
12 ball from one side and running with it to the  
13 other, so that's about all I know about it, other  
14 than it's a bloody damn sport.

15 JUDGE WEIDNER: It's actually a great sport and I  
16 loved every minute of playing it. But sure, I  
17 mean, you can have situations where tempers can  
18 get a little bit hot when you're on the pitch.  
19 And the way rugby is played, you don't -- it's  
20 not like, for example, football and no digs at  
21 football, but you know, you have a coach who  
22 every play is calling the plays. You have  
23 actually four or five coaches who are calling the  
24 different plays for the different pieces. When  
25 you're the captain coach, it's just you, and

1           you're on the pitch. And so you've got to be  
2           assessing what the other team's doing, how  
3           they're matching up with your guys. And if they  
4           get into a tussle, you got to be able to cool  
5           that off pretty quickly. And yeah, I suppose  
6           some of the skills translate.

7    SENATOR RANKIN: I'm impressed with family always and  
8           your mother here with us. I'm curious, what is  
9           her maiden name?

10   JUDGE WEIDNER: Chaney.

11   SENATOR RANKIN: Chaney? From -- and y'all are all  
12           from Oklahoma, originally?

13   JUDGE WEIDNER: That's correct.

14   SENATOR RANKIN: Wonderful having all of y'all here.  
15           And your son is in the --

16   JUDGE WEIDNER: Army.

17   SENATOR RANKIN: -- in the Army as well, so I want to  
18           commend you for, obviously, leading a life that  
19           is impressive to both children, and your son,  
20           particularly, to take up that mantel. So thank  
21           you very much.

22   JUDGE WEIDNER: Yes, sir, thank you.

23   CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Other members of the Commission?  
24           Well, Judge, I'll begin just to share with you  
25           some of the other comments, some of which Ms.

1 Trask noted that are in the ballot box survey,  
2 because I -- I think they're important for people  
3 to hear, because as my colleagues here are tired  
4 of hearing me say, people don't have to say nice  
5 things about you behind the cloak of anonymity on  
6 the internet. And yet, in your case, they chose  
7 to do universally just that: Even tempered, well  
8 prepared, meticulous to every detail. I've never  
9 seen him lose his cool, great legal mind,  
10 respectful and courteous to everyone,  
11 demonstrates integrity at the highest ethical  
12 standards, superior grasp of the law and how to  
13 apply it, a great temperament. Larry's humility  
14 matches his intellect. He is truly brilliant. I  
15 cannot recommend Larry strongly enough, and on  
16 and on. And so I commend you for that and I hope  
17 you take some pride in the reputation that you  
18 have earned through the way that you have  
19 conducted yourself and held yourself to others  
20 and you can't buy that. That's -- I appreciate  
21 that a lot. As I've reviewed the record here,  
22 you know, obviously, your studies at Dartmouth  
23 and Penn stand out, your superlative legal career  
24 where you've done just about everything that you  
25 can do in the field that you're interested in.

1 Probably the one thing that did catch my eye the  
2 most, as I've tried to explain to my wife the  
3 importance of it, and as a washed-up Marine, is  
4 on your DD214, you can shoot straight, and that's  
5 important, because in that line of work, it's  
6 important. So your expert qualifications, you  
7 know, probably not as relevant to adjudicating  
8 matters, but means something to me. All right.  
9 Anything else? Judge, appreciate you being here  
10 and thank you for your time. Apologize for the  
11 delay in our scheduling today, a little behind.  
12 Your patience, though, is much appreciated. This  
13 will conclude this portion of our screening  
14 process. I do need to take this moment to remind  
15 you that pursuant to the Commission's evaluative  
16 criteria, we take the spirit, as well as the  
17 letter of the law, very seriously, and we would  
18 view any violations or appearances of impropriety  
19 as very serious and potentially deserving of  
20 heavy weight in our screening deliberations. And  
21 as you know, the record remain open until the  
22 formal release of our qualifications report, such  
23 that if there were a need to arise to call you  
24 back to have a conversation about any of that  
25 sort thing, we can do that. Do you understand

1 all of that?

2 JUDGE WEIDNER: I do, sir.

3 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right, wonderful. Thank you  
4 very much for your service to the nation, to the  
5 state, to your community, and thank you for  
6 offering for future service.

7 JUDGE WEIDNER: Yes, sir.

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Wish you all well. Thank you,  
9 family, for being here as well. I hope you  
10 travel home safely.

11 JUDGE WEIDNER: Happy Birthday, Marine, and Happy  
12 Thanksgiving to everybody else. Thank you for  
13 your time.

14 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right, ladies and gentlemen, we  
15 will proceed now with the screening of our next  
16 candidate as soon as he or she is available.

17 (OFF THE RECORD)

18 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right, ladies and gentlemen.  
19 We are back on the record to proceed with our  
20 next screening. Before us, we have Catherine  
21 Webb, a candidate for Seat 4 on the 14th Judicial  
22 Circuit's family court bench. I do want to note,  
23 for the record, that John T. Lay has recused  
24 himself from this matter and will not participate  
25 in the screening deliberations or voting for this

1 candidate. So having said all that, Ms. Webb, do  
2 I have that right, the seat and name?

3 MS. WEBB: Catherine Webb, Seat 4 for 14th Judicial  
4 Circuit.

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Wonderful. If you would, please,  
6 raise your right hand.

7 WHEREUPON:

8 CATHERINE ALEXANNE WEBB, being duly sworn  
9 and cautioned to speak the truth, the whole truth  
10 and nothing but the truth, testifies as follows:

11 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: If you would, please, state your  
12 full name for the record.

13 MS. WEBB: Catherine Webb, Catherine Alexanne Webb.

14 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Wonderful. There should be some  
15 documents there in front of you. If you'd take a  
16 moment to look at those.

17 MS. WEBB: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Are those the Personal Data  
19 Questionnaire and the Sworn Statement that you  
20 have provided as part of your application  
21 materials?

22 MS. WEBB: They are.

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Are there any corrections or  
24 updates that need to be made?

25 MS. WEBB: No, sir.

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Any objection to our including  
2 those in the record?

3 MS. WEBB: No objection.

4 (EXHIBIT NO. 11 MARKED FOR  
5 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (19 pages)  
6 PDQ - Catherine Webb)

7 (EXHIBIT NO. 12 MARKED FOR  
8 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (6 pages)  
9 Sworn Statement - Catherine Webb)

10 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Let me give staff just a  
11 moment to do that. All right. The Judicial  
12 Merit Selection Commission has thoroughly  
13 investigated your qualifications for the bench.  
14 Our inquiry has focused on the nine evaluative  
15 criteria and it has included a ballot box survey,  
16 a thorough study of your application materials, a  
17 verification of compliance with state ethics  
18 laws, a search through newspaper articles in  
19 which your name appears, a study of any previous  
20 screenings, and a check for economic conflicts of  
21 interest. We have received no affidavits filed  
22 in opposition to your election and there are no  
23 witnesses are present to testify. I can either  
24 recognize you for a brief opening statement or we  
25 can turn to staff counsel to go ahead and begin

1 with some questions immediately and reserve a  
2 statement at the end, if you'd like.

3 MS. WEBB: Absolutely, I'm happy to. I know it's  
4 close to lunch. I'm happy to turn it over to the  
5 staff attorney.

6 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Thank you. And let me  
7 just also say thank you for your patience with  
8 scheduling, because are a little bit behind.

9 MS. WEBB: Oh, absolutely.

10 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: So with that, Ms. Adler.

11 EXAMINATION

12 BY MS. ADLER:

13 **Q. Good morning, Ms. Webb.**

14 A. Good morning.

15 **Q. Just for the record, could you please state the city  
16 and circuit in which you reside?**

17 A. Beaufort, 14th Judicial Circuit.

18 **Q. Thank you.**

19 MS. ADLER: Mr. Chairman, I note, for the record, that  
20 based on the testimony contained in the  
21 candidate's PDQ which has been included in the  
22 record with the candidate's consent, Catherine  
23 Webb meets the statutory requirements for this  
24 position regarding age, residence and years of  
25 practice.

1 Q. Ms. Webb, a two-part question: Why do you want to  
2 serve as a family court judge, and why do you feel  
3 that your legal and professional experience qualify  
4 and will assist you to be an effective judge?

5 A. This has actually been a very difficult question for  
6 me to answer and I currently work at the family court  
7 with our judges, and I speak at them on a regular  
8 basis, ask most of them, Why did you want to be a  
9 judge? And this question is a very difficult one  
10 because it is so personal. And for me, the bottom  
11 line is it comes down to I, at this stage in my  
12 career, am interested 100 percent in public service.  
13 I am interested in committing the rest of my career,  
14 honestly, to improving our community, working with  
15 families, working with vulnerable children. That's my  
16 passion. It's ultimately why I went to law school.  
17 When I was in college, I was a psychology major. I  
18 did sociology and I always thought I was going to be a  
19 social worker. And I had a family member in my life  
20 who encouraged me to go to law school, said you'll be  
21 able to do more things in your community and be more  
22 effective, and that's what I did. When I first ended  
23 up out of law school, my first job was at Travelers  
24 Insurance, really my first real job, doing insurance,  
25 the farthest thing from what I ultimately went to law

1 school for. But as things work, my career brought me  
2 to Beaufort and I started in private practice when I  
3 first came to Beaufort, and I have been in private  
4 practice since 2023, and I've recently joined the 14th  
5 Judicial Circuit as their law clerk, working with  
6 Judge Smoak and Judge Novak. And I think my  
7 experience in private practice, which has pretty much  
8 only focused on family law for the last 25 years,  
9 prepares me for this role. I was -- initially, when I  
10 came to Beaufort, I worked in a plaintiffs firm doing  
11 complex litigation, personal injury, and I thought,  
12 Oh, my gosh, how am I going to tie this in with what I  
13 actually -- my passion is? So I started taking DSS  
14 cases. Years ago, we used to get court appointed to  
15 DSS cases, so whether you liked it or not, initially,  
16 you were given DSS cases. And I was one of those  
17 people who loved it. I wanted to be involved in the  
18 DSS cases. And I would go to all the older lawyers  
19 and say, I know you're getting court appointed to  
20 this. I'm happy to take your case. And I discovered  
21 doing that that I actually loved advocating for the  
22 guardians in the DSS cases, so I made the decision to  
23 volunteer with our local guardian ad litem's office,  
24 which I did for about two years. I was doing, for my  
25 primary practice, a lot of real estate, but I did all

1 of the guardian cases with another attorney in my  
2 community, Stacey Canaday, and that was a great  
3 opportunity. And then after that experience, it sort  
4 of evolves. I really became good at actually being a  
5 guardian. It's sort of a skill you have to learn.  
6 And I, in about 2008, went to work for a family law  
7 firm. And when we first started at kind of building  
8 this firm, we were both -- I don't want to say  
9 inexperienced, but relatively inexperienced, and we  
10 did a lot of guardian cases. I did a lot of guardian  
11 cases as the actual guardian. And then we also did  
12 custody issues and as the years progressed, we pretty  
13 much moved into very complex financial cases. One of  
14 the last cases I handled I handled was a marital  
15 estate of about \$45 million, very complicated  
16 retirement accounts, totally different, you know,  
17 spectrum of what my passion was. But that's sort of  
18 how your practice progresses over the years. But over  
19 the last 20 -- you know, almost 25 years, I've pretty  
20 much incorporated every aspect of family law into my  
21 practice. And so I think that that experience of  
22 working with my community, for my community, would  
23 allow me to do -- to understand and do a good job in  
24 our community, you know. So that's -- that's why I  
25 initially wasn't sure, when they approached me, if I

1 wanted to actually be a family court judge. Not  
2 because I didn't appreciate people suggesting that it  
3 could be an opportunity, but I wanted to make sure  
4 that it was something that I could do well, so I  
5 really had to look back and pray about it, and I think  
6 that it's a perfect opportunity, and I think my  
7 experience matches up pretty succinctly with it for me  
8 to be successful at my position. And most recently,  
9 I'm now in the courtroom every day with our judges,  
10 listening to cases, helping prepare the actual orders.  
11 I've learned -- actually, believe it or not, I've  
12 learned a lot that when you actually are focused on  
13 very complex financial cases, you sort of don't -- you  
14 know, we had stopped doing some of the, like, DJJ  
15 cases. And I got to participate with Judge Smoak,  
16 Judge Madden and DJJ cases, review all of our -- in  
17 all of our courts and family court, we have a 365  
18 rule, where a, basically, case is dismissed at 365.  
19 The gave me the opportunity to review all of those  
20 cases, sit in with the solicitor's office, the public  
21 defender's office, so we could discuss and formulate a  
22 plan of how we're going to handle those cases, and I  
23 get to watch great lawyers and judges rule on our  
24 cases every day. So that's been a really great  
25 opportunity for me, and I think, ultimately, will make

1 me a better judge, if I receive the opportunity.

2 SENATOR RANKIN: I'm going to interrupt real quick.

3 And I'm going to help you help us. That was a  
4 beautiful answer, and I was paying close  
5 attention. The summary of --

6 MS. WEBB: Don't talk so much?

7 SENATOR RANKIN: -- the summary of why you want to  
8 do it, and that was the question, as I understand  
9 it.

10 MS. WEBB: and how my service would -- prior  
11 experience would help. So the reason I want to  
12 do it is public service.

13 SENATOR RANKIN: And so I appreciate all that. So  
14 thank you very much --

15 MS. WEBB: Okay.

16 SENATOR RANKIN: -- for that, and I did -- I was  
17 paying attention, so thank you.

18 MS. WEBB: Thank you.

19 BY MS. ADLER:

20 **Q. Ms. Webb, are there any areas of the law that you feel**  
21 **you would need additional preparation in order to**  
22 **serve as a family court judge; and if so, how would**  
23 **you handle that additional preparation?**

24 **A.** I think the answer is yes. I think every lawyer who  
25 comes before you has a need to improve. If you

1 thought we knew everything, we'd all be in trouble.  
2 So I -- my -- I would say my area of weakness,  
3 specifically, is DJJ. I've only really handled --  
4 independently, I represented a victim in a DJJ action.  
5 So what I would do is basically -- I mean, I have a  
6 great opportunity right now, because I'm sitting in  
7 with the best judges in the state watching them and  
8 learning from them and meeting with our solicitors.  
9 And I'm in the process of arranging to visit DJJ's  
10 facilities, and I've communicated with our -- we have  
11 our Marine Institute, which is local to Beaufort  
12 County, and my family was very involved with the Boys  
13 & Girls Club when it was in Beaufort. I am just  
14 trying to educate myself on resources, what's  
15 available, where we are right now in our community for  
16 helping juveniles who enter our system. Because we've  
17 got -- probably like everywhere in the state, we have  
18 a huge crisis, especially in Beaufort County. And you  
19 know, Colleton and Jasper, we have a lot of poverty  
20 and we have a lot of kids who have substantial needs,  
21 so I would just continue to educate myself. I've done  
22 CLEs since I've contemplated doing this position that  
23 addressed specifically Department of Juvenile Justice  
24 issues. I've studied the statute, and I ask every  
25 judge that I'm with, Well, why did you do this? You

1 know, they all do it a little bit differently, and so  
2 I would just continue to, you know, confer with my  
3 colleagues and try and grow educationally with my  
4 studying of the law.

5 Q. Thank you. Ms. Webb, you touched on this earlier, but  
6 could you just briefly describe your experience and  
7 perhaps quantifying time or cases handling complex  
8 family court matters, specifically, on the financial  
9 aspects of family court work?

10 A. Well, I've been doing complex family court matters  
11 solely since 2015. The number of cases, we handle --  
12 we handle about 60 cases at a time in our firm, but  
13 that doesn't mean that that's the ca- -- you know,  
14 just because you're maintaining that case load, that's  
15 the case that we maintain. I'm focusing on probably  
16 ten significant family law financial cases at a time.

17 Q. Thank you. Ms. Webb, the Commission received 106  
18 ballot box surveys regarding you with 9 additional  
19 comments. The ballot box survey contains the  
20 following positive comments, just by way of example:  
21 Catherine has a wealth of practical experience in  
22 family court. She possesses a strong intellect,  
23 analytical skills and work ethic, but also has a  
24 humility about her that would translate into an  
25 excellent judicial temperament. Catherine would be an

1 outstanding member of the family court bench. I've  
2 observed Catherine in contested legal matters for over  
3 15 years and she is extremely skilled. Catherine is  
4 diligent, civil and demonstrates integrity in all her  
5 actions. Her conduct as a guardian shows her  
6 dedication to the well being of children, especially  
7 in crisis cases. Catherine is known for her  
8 incredible legal research skills and adeptness in  
9 handling complication discovery and highly contested  
10 matters." And "Ms. Webb has an exceptional legal mind  
11 and would make such a positive impact on the legal  
12 community xin xher xxxxxx xactivity on the court  
13 bench. Her knowledge of multiple areas of law and  
14 extensive experience in family court cases make her a  
15 great fit for the bench. She's calm, patient,  
16 compassionate, fair, deliberate and firm, and the  
17 family court bench would truly benefit from her  
18 election. Two of the written comments expressed  
19 concerns, generally indicated that perhaps the  
20 commenters have not seen you actively litigate in  
21 family court and, therefore, couldn't envision you  
22 running a courtroom. What response would you offer to  
23 this concern?

24 A. Well, it had to be somebody young, I would say,  
25 because I have actively litigated -- I guess, what

1 does active mean? I had lots of DSS cases. I was an  
2 independent guardian ad litem. At one point, if it  
3 was a difficult case, with guardian cases, there was a  
4 judge on the bench who would pretty much usually  
5 appoint me because they knew that I absolutely could  
6 handle the courtroom, that I was used to being in the  
7 courtroom. And I think what maybe some of the younger  
8 lawyers don't realize is that I did have, at a period  
9 of time, a child who had some significant medical  
10 issues and when you are raising a family and your  
11 child has medical issues, it's very difficult to get  
12 court appointed, have to be in a, you know, probable  
13 cause hearing in 72 hours. Because for me, my  
14 daughter was in the hospital. So I would call  
15 Vanessa, who is our clerk, and say, I'm sorry, I can't  
16 make it, and she would say, I'm sorry, you've been  
17 court appointed. You need to come. So my -- the  
18 nature of my position did evolve over the years, but  
19 I'm actively in the courtroom. I'm actively preparing  
20 the questions for the depositions. I'm actively  
21 making sure we have all the exhibits. I'm actively  
22 preparing for cross. I'm not afraid of the courtroom.  
23 I love to compete. I was an All American swimmer when  
24 I was young. There's nothing more fun than the  
25 adrenalin of competing in a case and winning for your

1 client. But the reality of the situation is now I'm  
2 looking to do something very different. I'm looking  
3 to go back to sort of my desire to really focus on  
4 public service. I am very compassionate towards the  
5 community that we live in. It really -- since I've  
6 been sitting in the courtroom, which I do every day,  
7 so I -- I'm -- I enjoy being in the courtroom. But  
8 one of the things that really frustrates me is, coming  
9 from private practice is we want to make sure our  
10 clients really understand what's going to happen, what  
11 occurs in the courtroom. It's my job to hold their  
12 hands, you know, all the way through the process. And  
13 it really frustrates me, in child support cases, when  
14 these fathers are brought in and the goal is to get  
15 them to pay their moneys owed that they -- that they  
16 ultimately aren't educated on how to get on the SDU to  
17 make their payments. They're not given this simple  
18 little pamphlet. And I'll say to someone in the  
19 office, We got to make sure we have those pamphlets  
20 available.

21 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Ms. Webb, I'm sorry.

22 MS. WEBB: Sorry. You're like speed it up. Okay,  
23 sorry.

24 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Yeah. Two concerns. You weren't  
25 in the court- -- they didn't know you were in the

1           courtroom a lot.

2           MS. WEBB: Yeah.

3           CHAIRMAN CASKEY: You say you've been in the  
4           courtroom a lot; is that right?

5           MS. WEBB: Yes. Yes.

6           CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you. Ms. Adler.

7           MS. WEBB: I read the room. Okay, thank you. It  
8           won't happen again.

9           **Q. Ms. Webb, how would you handle a potential conflict of**  
10          **interest involving you or a member of your family?**

11          A. I would recuse myself.

12          **Q. Thank you.**

13          MS. ADLER: I would note that the Low Country Citizens  
14          Committee found Ms. Webb well qualified in the  
15          evaluative criteria of ethical fitness,  
16          professional and academic ability, character,  
17          reputation, experience and judicial temperament.  
18          Additionally, the Committee found Ms. Webb  
19          qualified in the criteria of constitutional  
20          qualifications, physical health and mental  
21          stability. The Committee stated, in summary,  
22          Committed to the community. Personal connections  
23          through her life experience with family court.  
24          Many years of practice in family court.  
25          Compassionate and dedicated.

1 Q. Just a few housekeeping issues. JMSC Procedural Rule  
2 17 includes the prohibition of any candidate from  
3 attending or watching any portion of any of the  
4 livestream or recordings of the public hearings of  
5 this cycle until all the hearings are concluded. Have  
6 you watched or listened to any of these hearings  
7 before your appearance today?

8 A. No, ma'am.

9 Q. Has any other person relayed any information about any  
10 of the proceedings before this Commission to you?

11 A. No, ma'am.

12 Q. Ms. Webb, are you aware that as a judicial candidate,  
13 you are bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct as found  
14 in Rule 501 of the South Carolina Appellate Court  
15 Rules?

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 Q. Ms. Webb, since submitting your letter of intent, have  
18 you contacted any members of the Commission about your  
19 candidacy?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70 of South  
22 Carolina Code including the limitations on contacting  
23 members of the General Assembly regarding your  
24 screening?

25 A. I am.

1 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you  
2 sought or received a pledge of any legislator, either  
3 prior to this date or pending the outcome of your  
4 screening?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members of  
7 the General Assembly on your behalf or are you aware  
8 of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
9 your behalf?

10 A. No.

11 Q. And finally, have you reviewed and do you understand  
12 the Commission's guidelines on pledging in South  
13 Carolina Code Section 2-19-70(e)?

14 A. I do.

15 MS. ADLER: I would just note, for the record, that  
16 any concerns raised during the investigation  
17 regarding the candidate were incorporated into  
18 the questioning of the candidate today. And Mr.  
19 Chairman, I have no further questions.

20 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, ma'am. And Ms. Webb, I  
21 hope you don't think I'm being incredibly rude.

22 I was trying to steer you to success --

23 MS. WEBB: I appreciate that.

24 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- on that last question.

25 MS. WEBB: I need all the guidance I can --

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: I do have a question, though,  
2 about your professional history. I noted from  
3 the PDQ -- and I may have missed this, so you may  
4 have said it. But you worked at the law firm  
5 through 2023 and then began as a judicial law  
6 clerk in 2025.

7 MS. WEBB: Correct.

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Can you tell me about the  
9 transition there?

10 MS. WEBB: In 2023, after COVID, I had lost my father,  
11 who was living with me, and he had Alzheimer's  
12 and I cared for him on a regular basis and I  
13 wanted a break. I ended up having a medical  
14 procedure, because if any of you have had a  
15 parent who's had Alzheimer's you know they fall  
16 all the time. And so --

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: And I don't need to pull in --

18 MS. WEBB: Yeah.

19 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- you know, there --

20 MS. WEBB: So I had that gap. I -- at the time, I  
21 started a property management business, which is  
22 very easy, on Fripp where I reside, currently.  
23 And I put on my headphones and I focused on  
24 myself and took some time off. And then when I  
25 was ready to come back, I looked for different

1 opportunities and decided to come back.

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: The other question I had was,  
3 again, in your PDQ, you had noted that you had  
4 been the second chair -- and I'll say the word  
5 mostly. I can't find the exact place. But if  
6 that is right, tell me about why second chairing,  
7 not as a first chair.

8 MS. WEBB: The primary reason was, in 2008,  
9 specifically, not for the guardian cases,  
10 obviously, because that's illegal, I did it  
11 because I had a child who has a medical condition  
12 and so -- and I'm really good at second chair.  
13 I'm very detailed oriented, so we made the  
14 decision that I would be second chair primarily,  
15 second chair versus first chair. Second chair is  
16 the person who, for litigation, meets with the  
17 clients, does the research, does all the  
18 discovery, sort of orchestrates the file. But me  
19 and my partner worked really hand in hand. We  
20 were one brain sort of together. And which I  
21 think you need for a first and second chair.  
22 I've also served as first chair. I've served as  
23 fourth chair. It's just different roles in the  
24 courtroom when you're present in the courtroom.

25 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Thank you, ma'am.

1 Other commissioners have questions for the  
2 candidate? Ms. Craig.

3 MS. CRAIG: Ms. Webb, thank you for being here today  
4 and your willingness to serve as a family court  
5 judge. I believe you said you've practiced in  
6 family law, did you say, 25 years?

7 MS. WEBB: Yes, approximately.

8 MS. CRAIG: And then I wrote down -- I just wanted to  
9 to a quick list of your -- the matters that  
10 you've handled in family court over those years.  
11 I think you said you were actively in the  
12 courtroom, you've handled DSS matters, guardian  
13 ad litem. Anything else to add to that list?

14 MS. WEBB: Custody, visitation, divorce, equitable  
15 apportionment.

16 MS. CRAIG: Thank you very much.

17 SENATOR RANKIN: And to the point of that, looking  
18 back five years, in the last five years, two  
19 cases have gone to trial and resulted in an  
20 order, not a verdict. And that -- you just  
21 talked about the second chair. You must be a  
22 great negotiator or have a great steel of  
23 bringing your cases to resolution through  
24 mediation. How have you avoided or been  
25 successful not to have to have any trials?

1 MS. WEBB: Well, honestly, if you really understand  
2 your case, mediation is -- it's been amazing. We  
3 have great mediators and probably 90 to 95  
4 percent of our cases settle in mediation. You  
5 need to understand your case. If your client has  
6 unreasonable expectations, then sometimes it may  
7 be that your -- you need to part ways, because  
8 they want something that you don't perceive as  
9 reasonable. But usually, our clients are --  
10 we're a team, we're on the same page, and we're  
11 working towards the same goal, and mediation  
12 helps us get there. Also, in the last five  
13 years, we had COVID, so COVID changed the  
14 dynamic. We were on Webex. We were not in the  
15 courtroom. Unfortunately, the one case we had to  
16 litigate, sadly, it was because -- it was over  
17 custody, it wasn't over financial issues. You  
18 can pretty much -- we have excellent expectations  
19 set for our clients and you can pretty much  
20 settle all cases except for sometimes you can't  
21 settle custody.

22 SENATOR RANKIN: All right. Okay. And again, you are  
23 presently, since August, an employee of the state  
24 or an employee of the county?

25 MS. WEBB: That's correct, I'm an employee of the

1 state.

2 SENATOR RANKIN: Okay, as a law clerk?

3 MS. WEBB: Law clerk, yes, sir.

4 SENATOR RANKIN: Very good, from two judges, Smoak and  
5 Novak.

6 MS. WEBB: Correct.

7 SENATOR RANKIN: Okay. One final point, and not to  
8 belabor, but just to call attention to your story  
9 --

10 MS. WEBB: Yes, sir.

11 SENATOR RANKIN: -- as an adopted child, my mother was  
12 adopted. We didn't know that until later.  
13 Oddly, in our family, that was not discussed. We  
14 knew it, but she never told us, but we knew it.  
15 And so -- and then to the fact that your father  
16 has passed, you highlight his career as a pilot  
17 in the Air Force and so --

18 MS. WEBB: Yes, sir.

19 SENATOR RANKIN: -- I just want to tell you we had --  
20 the last -- I'll call it contestant brought  
21 family with them. You have brought your family  
22 to me today, and that just speaks volumes to you.

23 MS. WEBB: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Other Commissioners? Seeing none,  
25 then, Ms. Webb, this will conclude this portion

1 of the screening process. Excuse me. I do need  
2 to take this opportunity to remind you that  
3 pursuant to the Commission's evaluative criteria,  
4 we take the letter and spirit of our state's  
5 ethics laws very seriously and we would view any  
6 violation of appearance of impropriety as very  
7 serious and potentially deserving of heavy weight  
8 in our screening deliberations. On that note,  
9 and as you know, the record will remain open  
10 until the formal release of the qualifications  
11 report and so if the need were to arise, we would  
12 have the ability to call you back to discuss  
13 whatever that might be, again, should that need  
14 rise. Do you understand all of that?

15 MS. WEBB: Yes, sir.

16 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Excuse me. I've  
17 finally caught my colleague's cough. I want to  
18 thank you again for your service and offering for  
19 judicial service to the State of South Carolina.  
20 I appreciate your patience with scheduling today  
21 and wish you all the best as you travel home  
22 safely.

23 MS. WEBB: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you. We will stand at ease  
25 until the next candidate is here and then we'll

1 resume.

2 (OFF THE RECORD)

3 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right, ladies and gentlemen.

4 We will go back on the record to proceed with our  
5 next screening. Ms. Moore, your candidacy is  
6 atypical in that you have applied to run for two  
7 seats, both in the same circuit for the family  
8 court. Our rules require us to have separate  
9 hearings for each. And so we will do that. But  
10 I suspect and anticipate a motion in the second  
11 hearing to adopt or incorporate all of the  
12 answers and documents from the first hearing so  
13 that we will have complied with the rule to have  
14 two hearings. But in the interest of efficiency  
15 and common sense, we will probably just spend--  
16 I anticipate spending all of our time evaluating  
17 or extracting information just in one principal  
18 hearing and then doing the work of carrying it  
19 over through a motion. Does that make sense for  
20 you?

21 MS. MOORE: Sounds fantastic.

22 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. So on that note, you  
23 are Scarlet Moore and you are a candidate for  
24 Seat 3 on the 14th Judicial Circuit Family Court  
25 bench. Do I have that right?

1 MS. MOORE: That is correct.

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. If you would, please,  
3 raise your right hand.

4 WHEREUPON:

5 SCARLET BELL MOORE, being duly sworn and  
6 cautioned to speak the truth, the whole truth and  
7 nothing but the truth, testifies as follows:

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: If you would, please, state your  
9 full name.

10 MS. MOORE: Scarlet Bell Moore.

11 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Ms. Moore, there are some  
12 documents in front of you. If you'd just take a  
13 moment to review those.

14 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir.

15 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Are those the Personal  
16 Data Questionnaire and the Sworn Statement that  
17 you have submitted as part of your application  
18 materials?

19 MS. MOORE: They are.

20 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Are there any changes or updates  
21 that need to be made?

22 MS. MOORE: No.

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Do you have any objection to our  
24 including them in the record?

25 MS. MOORE: No objection.

1 (EXHIBIT NO. 13 MARKED FOR  
2 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (18 pages)  
3 PDQ - Scarlet B. Moore)

4 (EXHIBIT NO. 14 MARKED FOR  
5 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (9 pages)  
6 Sworn Statement - Scarlet B.  
7 Moore)

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Let me give staff just  
9 a moment to do that. All right. And before  
10 going any further, I just need to note, for the  
11 record, that Commissioner John T. Lay is not  
12 participating in this screening in any way. The  
13 Judicial Merit Selection Commission has  
14 thoroughly investigated your qualifications for  
15 the bench. Our inquiry has focused on the nine  
16 evaluative criteria and has included a ballot box  
17 survey, a thorough study of your application  
18 materials, verification of your compliance with  
19 state ethics laws, a search of newspaper articles  
20 in which your name appears, a study of any  
21 previous screenings, and a check for economic  
22 conflicts of interest. We have received no  
23 affidavits in opposition to your election and  
24 there are no witnesses present today to testify.  
25 We'd be happy to hear from you in a brief opening

1 statement if you'd like, or you may waive that  
2 and we can proceed to questions from counsel  
3 straightaway.

4 MS. MOORE: Yes. I'll waive that. But just to say  
5 that it's a pleasure and a privilege to be here  
6 with you today. Thank you.

7 EXAMINATION

8 BY MS. STARNES:

9 **Q. Good afternoon, Ms. Moore. It's good to see you**  
10 **again.**

11 A. And you as well.

12 **Q. Would you please state for the record the city and**  
13 **circuit in which you reside?**

14 A. I live in Greenville, South Carolina. I believe  
15 that's the 13th Circuit.

16 **Q. Yes, thank you.**

17 MS. STARNES: Mr. Chairman, for purposes of the  
18 record, Ms. Moore is running for Family Court  
19 Seats 3 and 4, which are located in the 14th  
20 Judicial Circuit. Under South Carolina Code  
21 Section 63-3-30, no person shall be eligible to  
22 the office of family court judge who is not, at  
23 the time of assuming his duties of such office, a  
24 citizen of the United States and of this state,  
25 and has not attained the age of 32 years, has not

1           been a licensed attorney at law for at least  
2           eight years, and has not been a resident of this  
3           state for five years max preceding his election  
4           and is not a resident of the circuit wherein the  
5           family court of which he is the judge is located.

6   **Q. Ms. Moore, would you please share with the Commission**  
7   **what your intentions are in applying for this seat and**  
8   **what you have done at this point to comply with this**  
9   **statute?**

10   **A.** Yes. So I certainly meet all the requirements. I  
11   have a 43-year relationship with Hilton Head Islands,  
12   and I'll be glad to go into more detail about that.  
13   But it would be my pleasure and privilege, if I were  
14   elected, to live somewhere in the 14th Circuit. The  
15   beauty, I think, of my candidacy is that there are  
16   five counties of the 14th Circuit. I could live in  
17   any of those -- those counties and I've practiced in  
18   almost all of them. So certainly, my intent, I  
19   understand that at the time that I would take office,  
20   I would need to be a resident of that area, and that  
21   is my desire, and it would be my privilege. And I  
22   hope that answers your question.

23   **Q. Thank you.**

24   MS. STARNES: Mr. Chairman, I'd note for the record,  
25           that based on the testimony contained in the

1 candidate's PDQ, which has been included in the  
2 record with the candidate's consent, Ms. Moore  
3 meets the statutory requirements for this  
4 position regarding age, residence and years of  
5 practice.

6 **Q. Ms. Moore, why do you want to serve as a family court**  
7 **judge, and why do you feel that your legal and**  
8 **professional experience qualifies and assists you to**  
9 **be a judge?**

10 A. There are so many reasons. There isn't just one  
11 reason. But as I detail in my PDQ, I -- the issue of  
12 juvenile justice represents the intersection of two  
13 areas of the law that I most enjoy, and that's  
14 criminal law, as well as child welfare law. I have  
15 extensive experience in both areas. Also, I have  
16 represented kids in DJJ for about the past five years,  
17 and so I have a lot of passion for those issues.  
18 Those children are in crisis, and I would love to be  
19 in a position of authority as a judge to craft  
20 remedies and solutions for these children so they do  
21 not transition into adult court, which I've had  
22 extensive experience. In regard to criminal law, I  
23 think my record is very clear. Not only was I a law  
24 professor at Lander University for seven years, as  
25 well as two years at Charlotte Law, so nine years

1 total. I taught criminal -- criminal topics in both  
2 institutions, but I've also been a criminal  
3 practitioner for most of my career. So I do believe,  
4 just looking at my experience, I do have the  
5 experience to preside over DJJ matters. The next  
6 reason is I have a lot of experience. I've worked  
7 very hard over my almost 25 years as an attorney.  
8 I've done virtually everything that you can do in  
9 family court, not only just at the trial level, but  
10 also at the appellate level, and I detail that in my  
11 PDQ. So I feel that I've got a lot of experience --  
12 experiences, knowledge and success that I could bring  
13 to the family court. The last reason is my  
14 temperament, and I'm drawing from what my colleagues  
15 and my clients have told me in regard to my  
16 temperament. I believe I could enhance the family  
17 court, not just my colleagues on the family court  
18 bench, but also the litigants. Thank you.

19 **Q. Thank you. Are there any areas of the law for which**  
20 **you would need additional preparation in order to**  
21 **serve as a family court judge? And how would you**  
22 **handle that additional preparation?**

23 **A.** I can't think of any topics off the top of my head. I  
24 think I've done virtually everything there is to do in  
25 family court at this time.

1 Q. Thank you. Would you please briefly describe your  
2 experience in handling complex contested family court  
3 matters and specifically discuss your experience with  
4 the financial aspect of the family court work.

5 A. So my understanding in regard to complex litigation is  
6 a designation that litigants or parties request of the  
7 chief administrative judge in each individual county.  
8 There does not appear to be an specific criteria in  
9 designating a case as complex, but the goal would be  
10 for one particular judge to be assigned to the case  
11 going forward. So -- but let me give you an idea. So  
12 I don't think there's any specific criterion that  
13 designates a case complex, but let me give you some  
14 criteria that I think are relevant and that I've had  
15 extensive experience with. Children who have special  
16 needs, children who are specially situated maybe under  
17 the care of many experts, medical professionals,  
18 psychiatric professionals, et cetera -- as you can  
19 see, I was with DSS for 19 years. I have had  
20 experience with many children who've had the special  
21 needs that I would refer to in regard to complex. In  
22 regard to property, complex litigation, I think most  
23 of my experience comes at the appellate level in that  
24 regard, and I have written appeals in regard to  
25 complex business valuations, for example. So I think

1 that answers your question.

2 Q. Thank you. Ms. Moore, for Seat 3, the Commission  
3 received 277 ballot box surveys regarding you with 56  
4 additional comments. The survey, for example, contain  
5 the following positive comments: Scarlet Moore is a  
6 brilliant legal scholar and her temperament will be  
7 perfect for the bench. Ms. Moore has a vast range of  
8 experience. Her skill set is unparalleled in the  
9 family court, Bar, and South Carolina would greatly  
10 benefit with her on the bench. Nine of the 56  
11 comments expressed concerns. Several comments  
12 expressed concerns about the extent of your knowledge  
13 and experience handling cases beyond DSS matters.  
14 What response would you offer to those concerns?

15 A. I think it's just not having awareness. I estimate  
16 I've handled about 150 what I would consider to be  
17 private trial family court matters. And so, you know,  
18 certainly, I've been on the ground in family court,  
19 practicing at the trial level. I think that's just  
20 not being aware of my -- the extent of my resume.

21 Q. Thank you. Three comments expressed concerns about  
22 your lack of connection to the 14th Circuit. What  
23 response would you offer to those concerns?

24 A. Yeah. So as I pointed out, I have a 43-year  
25 relationship with Hilton Head Island. My aunt moved

1 there in 1982 when it was a stop light and Coligny  
2 Plaza. So I've been traveling down there since that  
3 time. I was engaged on the 18th green of Harbour Town  
4 Golf Links, which is where -- just overlooking the  
5 beautiful red and white lighthouse in Hilton Head  
6 Island and so, obviously, those are wonderful  
7 memories. I've celebrated countless birthdays,  
8 weddings, funerals, holidays, Thanksgiving. I'll be  
9 there next week celebrating Thanksgiving, so I'm  
10 certainly no stranger to the area. But perhaps more  
11 important to the inquiry of the Commission, I -- when  
12 I was in private practice, I had a statewide practice,  
13 and I appeared in Colleton, Hampton, as well as  
14 Beaufort County. I handled private divorce matters in  
15 Beaufort County. I also represented DSS in those  
16 three counties. I've handled appellate matters for  
17 Beaufort County. I also handled an appellate matter  
18 for Jasper. So I certainly have practiced in that  
19 area over the years, but I also have a great affinity  
20 for that area. But again, that -- that having been  
21 said, there are five counties in the 14th Circuit and  
22 so, you know, life circumstances are such that my  
23 children are now educated. I think I'm free to move  
24 about the cabin, if you will, and I would love to live  
25 in this area and to explore this opportunity. I hope

1           that answer your question.

2   **Q.   Yes, thank you.**

3   A.   Okay.

4   **Q.   Ms. Moore, while the majority of the comments were**  
5       **extremely positive regarding your temperament, a few**  
6       **expressed concerns about your professionalism in the**  
7       **courtroom and dealings with opposing counsel.  What**  
8       **response would you offer to those concerns?**

9   A.   So I hate to hear that anybody would have that  
10       impression of me, and I know that a common response to  
11       these types of responses is that there's no context.  
12       You know, unfortunately, we don't have any context.  I  
13       can tell you that I have a 19-year association with  
14       the state agency, the Department of Social Services.  
15       After about three or four years with the agency, they  
16       put me on the road and so I went to 37 counties, which  
17       I think is a testament to my professionalism.  I don't  
18       think that a state agency is going to send me to that  
19       many counties if I don't get along with opposing  
20       counsel, if I'm disrespectful and if the judges, you  
21       know, are complaining.  And so that would be my  
22       response.  You know, I was sent into areas really  
23       sight unseen.  I would get a call and say, Can you be  
24       in this county next Tuesday?  And I just don't think,  
25       in a state agency, I have a 19-year association with

1 as many counties that I traveled to if I had lack of  
2 professionalism. Now, I mean, in fairness, I will say  
3 that, you know, what we do in family court sometimes  
4 if very heated and it's very -- and contentious. And  
5 so I certainly have had that -- you know, cases where,  
6 you know, I guess, my relationship with opposing  
7 counsel has been better than others. So I hope that  
8 answers your question.

9 **Q. Thank you.**

10 A. Okay.

11 **Q. Ms. Moore, you indicated in your PDQ that you are**  
12 **named as a defendant in a matter filed in Superior**  
13 **Court in Providence, Rhode Island in July of 2023, due**  
14 **to your status as a beneficiary of a trust. Would you**  
15 **please explain the nature and status of this lawsuit?**

16 A. Yes. So it's still pending. It's been pending for  
17 about two-and-a-half years. I'm named as a  
18 beneficiary, and it's being contested. My beneficiary  
19 status is being contested. It's ongoing. The  
20 plaintiff died in May of this year. Her estate has  
21 been substituted. But again, we've had multiple  
22 motions to dismiss for the other side not answering  
23 discovery. But the case is ongoing.

24 **Q. Thank you.**

25 A. You're welcome.

1 Q. And Ms. Moore, if you were elected to the family court  
2 bench, how would you handle a potential conflict of  
3 interest involving you or a member of your family?

4 A. Yes. So I think -- I think I would be very -- very  
5 cautious in any regard to any conflict of interest or  
6 any appearance of any conflict of interest. Any  
7 concern that anyone would have about a conflict to me,  
8 I'm going to treat that very carefully, not  
9 conservatively. And likely, would probably recuse  
10 myself.

11 Q. Thank you.

12 MS. STARNES: To note for the record, the Low Country  
13 Citizens Committee found Ms. Moore to be well  
14 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical  
15 fitness, professional and academic ability,  
16 character, reputation, experience and judicial  
17 temperament and qualified in the evaluative  
18 criteria of constitutional qualifications,  
19 physical health and mental stability. The  
20 Committee's related comment was: Deep impressive  
21 family court experience at trial and appellate  
22 levels. Extremely sharp and knowledgeable. Very  
23 good presence. Extremely impressive. Would make  
24 a very good family court judge.

25 Q. Now, just a few housekeeping issues.

1 A. Thank you.

2 Q. JMSC Procedural Rule 17 includes a prohibition of any  
3 candidate from attending or watching any portion of  
4 the livestream or recordings of the public hearings of  
5 this cycle until after all the hearings are concluded.  
6 Have you watched or listened to any of these hearings  
7 before your appearance today?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Has any other person relayed any information about any  
10 of the proceedings before this Commission to you?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Ms. Moore, are you aware that as a judicial candidate,  
13 you are bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct as found  
14 in Rule 501 of the South Carolina Appellate Court  
15 Rules?

16 A. I am.

17 Q. Since submitting your Letter of Intent, have you  
18 contacted any members of the Commission about your  
19 candidacy?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70 including the  
22 limitations on contacting members of the General  
23 Assembly regarding your screening?

24 A. I am familiar, yes.

25 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you

1 sought or received a pledge of any legislator, either  
2 prior to this date or pending the outcome of your  
3 screening?

4 A. I have not.

5 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members of  
6 the General Assembly on your behalf or are you aware  
7 of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on  
8 your behalf?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the  
11 Commission's guidelines on pledging in South Carolina  
12 Code Section 2-19-70(e)?

13 A. I have.

14 MS. STARNES: I would like to note, for the record,  
15 that any concerns raised during the investigation  
16 regarding the candidate were incorporated into my  
17 questioning of the candidate today. Mr.  
18 Chairman, I have no further questions.

19 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, ma'am. Do members of  
20 the Commission have questions? Mr. Stegmaier?

21 MR. STEGMAIER: Ma'am, good morning.

22 MS. MOORE: Good morning.

23 MR. STEGMAIER: So my understanding is, right now,  
24 your practice is headquartered in Laurens County,  
25 correct?

1 MS. MOORE: That's correct. I'm a full-time public  
2 defender. I started this job in January of 2024.  
3 My employer graciously has agreed to let me  
4 finish at my practice. I do have some lingering  
5 matters. But yes, I'm a full-time public  
6 defender.

7 MR. STEGMAIER: So prior to moving over to Laurens  
8 County, your office was in Greenville?

9 MS. MOORE: In Greenville, yes, downtown.

10 MR. STEGMAIER: And you had elaborated on your  
11 affinity for Hilton Head and --

12 MS. MOORE: I have.

13 MR. STEGMAIER: -- I appreciate that. Has there  
14 been ever a point in time during your practice  
15 where you've had an office in the 14th circuit?

16 MS. MOORE: I have not, no.

17 MR. STEGMAIER: And do you own any real property  
18 currently in the 14th Circuit?

19 MS. MOORE: I do not.

20 MR. STEGMAIER: Have you ever owned property in the  
21 14th Circuit?

22 MS. MOORE: No.

23 MR. STEGMAIER: Thank you.

24 MS. MOORE: You're welcome.

25 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Mr. Protopapas.

1 MR. PROTOPAPAS: Welcome and --

2 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

3 MR. PROTOPAPAS: -- thank you for offering yourself --

4 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

5 MR. PROTOPAPAS: -- for this judgeship. One of the  
6 questions you were asked was regarding complex  
7 cases and complex financial cases. And I  
8 listened to your answer closely, but I wasn't  
9 sure if I got comfortable with this. I see  
10 extraordinary experience in DSS. I see  
11 extraordinary experience in criminal. But  
12 talking about the complex financial, Hilton Head  
13 and that area, there are going to be lots of  
14 divorces that have things like index universal  
15 life policies, REITs, retirement plans, closely  
16 held corporations, all of that. Have you had  
17 experience in the valuation of those sorts of  
18 things in complex financial divorces?

19 MS. MOORE: Yeah, so as I said, I think my  
20 experience in those topics has been really at the  
21 appellate level. For example, I've written  
22 appellate briefs and had appellate matters in  
23 regard to very expensive or very valuable  
24 equitable division issues. In fact, I have a  
25 case in the Supreme Court now where the estate is

1           worth several millions of dollars and also  
2           implicates several businesses and business  
3           valuation issues. So as far as, you know, at the  
4           trial level, you know, I certainly have -- I've  
5           represented very wealthy clients as I've  
6           represented very poor clients. But I also  
7           believe that I've addressed and studied and  
8           written about complex issues. Has my practice  
9           been, you know, representing people who have  
10          these types of issues? No, it has not, at the  
11          trial level.

12       MR. PROTOPAPAS: Have you had to handle complex  
13          discovery issues at the trial court level?

14       MS. MOORE:       So complex -- could you give me an  
15          example of what you're referring to or --

16       MR. PROTOPAPAS: Sure. A subpoena goes to -- from a  
17          spouse to spouse's accountant, that accountant,  
18          they're asking for the working papers, perhaps,  
19          for a closely held LLC. The objection is lodged,  
20          that it is work product or attorney/client  
21          privilege.

22       MS. MOORE:       Uh-huh (affirmative).

23       MR. PROTOPAPAS: Now the matter is teed up before  
24          court on the -- where is work product begin or  
25          end, the attorney/client privilege. What I mean

1 is that in the discovery world, discovery and --  
2 discovery and complex financial cases hits on  
3 those work product issues. Hits on  
4 attorney/client privilege issues.

5 MS. MOORE: Uh-huh (affirmative).

6 MR. PROTOPAPAS: Hits on what is relevant and properly  
7 produced, what gets drug into the family court  
8 estate and divided into. I have limited  
9 experience in family court. I get brought into  
10 the end handle the -- I used to, before I was  
11 smart enough to realize never to go to family  
12 court. I used to do that sort of work and I'm  
13 curious if you've been involved in that kind of  
14 contested back and forth --

15 MS. MOORE: Yes.

16 MR. PROTOPAPAS: -- discovery that goes on?

17 MS. MOORE: I simply have not. I have not been  
18 involved in contested. I know that my colleagues  
19 and -- that I've spoken to who have been involved  
20 in those cases, I sought guidance because I just  
21 really anticipated this question. You know, it's  
22 my understanding that we can have multiple  
23 parties sitting in the family court. Like for  
24 example, a husband and their legal team, wife and  
25 their legal team, trustee one and their legal

1 team, trustee two and their legal team. And so  
2 I've also -- I understand that the parties can  
3 spend perhaps a day, if not days, litigating the  
4 issue in discovery issues, you know, motions to  
5 compel. I've never been a part of any of those  
6 types of things. But that --

7 MR. PROTOPAPAS: But --

8 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir.

9 MR. PROTOPAPAS: -- yeah. No, and that certainly  
10 doesn't preclude in any way from being a judge.  
11 The criminal side, I know you're well versed.  
12 But things like what would you do to kind of get  
13 yourself ready for, let's say, a fulsome  
14 understanding of a 30(b)(6) depositions --

15 MS. MOORE: Uh-huh (affirmative), uh-huh  
16 (affirmative).

17 MR. PROTOPAPAS: -- there's rules that go into a 45 --  
18 Rule 45 subpoena compelling and --

19 MS. MOORE: Yes.

20 MR. PROTOPAPAS: -- and so forth. Tell me how you'd  
21 kind of get yourself up to speed so you'd be  
22 comfortable in those settings?

23 MS. MOORE: Well, all I can say is that, you know,  
24 certainly, it would require -- anytime you don't  
25 have any familiarity with any area of the law,

1           you have to research it. And I think -- again,  
2           I'm going to harken back to my appellate record.  
3           You know, I have almost 20 appearances at the  
4           Court of Appeals, as well as the Supreme Court in  
5           regard to oral argument, which has required me to  
6           write appellate briefs. And I will tell you, one  
7           thing I did not put in my PDQ is that I've  
8           written common pleas briefs. In fact, we had a  
9           big win last year in regard to the issue of  
10          easements, the Maybank versus Zurlo. I didn't  
11          know anything about easements, but I had no  
12          problem not only trying at the Court of Appeals,  
13          they decided to take it to the Supreme Court,  
14          cert denied, affirmed. We had a great win for  
15          our client. And so I think I've displayed in  
16          some of my appellate practice to ability to  
17          research any issues that I may not be familiar  
18          with and write -- and be successful. So I don't  
19          know if that answers your question.

20       MR. PROTOPAPAS: It does, absolutely.

21       MS. MOORE:        Okay.

22       MR. PROTOPAPAS: Thank you.

23       MS. MOORE:        You're welcome.

24       CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   Any other members of the  
25                        Commission? Representative Stavrinakis?

1 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Ms. Moore, welcome.

2 MS. MOORE: Thank you. Thank you.

3 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: And congratulations on  
4 your career and thank you for offering yourself  
5 for service in the South Carolina judiciary.

6 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

7 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: I appreciate the candor  
8 with which you address the residency issue. You  
9 mention some work you had done in some of the  
10 areas of the 14th Circuit previously. When was  
11 that work?

12 MS. MOORE: So I think the most recent appearance I  
13 would've had in Beaufort County would've been in  
14 2023.

15 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Okay. But I mean, the  
16 lion's share of that work, you mentioned at a  
17 previous time in your career. So --

18 MS. MOORE: Right. It was --

19 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: -- if you were appearing  
20 regularly in those courts -- have you ever  
21 appeared regularly in those courts? And if you  
22 did, what would be the timeframes about which  
23 that would've occurred?

24 MS. MOORE: So it would've been prior to 2023. So  
25 for years, I served as a sub attorney in DSS for

1 Tracey Klatt who was the DSS attorney down in  
2 Beaufort County. So I would say probably for  
3 about -- about a five-year period prior to 2023,  
4 I would fill in periodically, so it was just an  
5 as-needed basis. But I also handled a bulk of  
6 the appellate matters that came out of the 14th  
7 Circuit. So I don't know if that answer your  
8 question. And in regards to --

9 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Handled those where,  
10 though?

11 MS. MOORE: So I handled -- the appellate matters?

12 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Yeah.

13 MS. MOORE: Yeah, so it was in Beaufort County, as  
14 well as I know I've handled appellate matters in  
15 Jasper County as well.

16 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: So, but I mean, you  
17 handled them in what capacity?

18 MS. MOORE: I was the DSS attorney. So like, for  
19 example, if there was an appeal that as filed, I  
20 would be the respondent. Most of the time, for  
21 DSS, and I don't have any recollection where I've  
22 --

23 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: And those appeals  
24 would've been heard by what court?

25 MS. MOORE: The Court of Appeals, right, and they

1           were matters --

2 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: So in Columbia.

3 MS. MOORE: Correct, right.

4 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Okay.

5 MS. MOORE: And they were matters from the 14th  
6 Circuit.

7 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Okay.

8 MS. MOORE: But I also appeared on the trial matters  
9 filling in when people had vacations, when there  
10 were lapses in employment. Like for example, the  
11 DSS attorney resigned or had a leave of absence  
12 or had a vacation, I would be called upon to fill  
13 in down in the 14th Circuit.

14 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: And so I want to make  
15 sure I characterize this correctly. The work  
16 that you've done was prior to 2023 and limited to  
17 DSS, predominantly limited to DSS work?

18 MS. MOORE: Yes. And I also have some domestic  
19 relations cases. I did some divorces, so --

20 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: And when were those?

21 MS. MOORE: -- yes. So those would've been -- I  
22 think the last one was 2023. And then the other  
23 one was --

24 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Those are in the 14th  
25 Circuit?

1 MS. MOORE: In the 14th Circuit in Beaufort County,  
2 yes. And the first one that I did was 2004.  
3 That was -- in fact, that was the very -- I think  
4 that was the very first hearing that I even had  
5 in the State of South Carolina when I moved here  
6 from Louisiana.

7 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Right.

8 MS. MOORE: Yeah.

9 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Absent this position, do  
10 you have an intent to live in the 14th Circuit or  
11 is it contingent on success in this election or  
12 one of these two elections?

13 MS. MOORE: Yeah, so -- so both my children are  
14 college educated now and so I don't -- I don't  
15 have anything holding me back at this point. And  
16 so I would very much like to live somewhere on  
17 the coast. Because my closest friends live on  
18 the coast. My family lives in Hilton Head, as I  
19 said. I've got other family members that live  
20 there. I'm looking at all the options. I'm at a  
21 wonderful point in my life where I have just  
22 incredible options.

23 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: To the degree that me or  
24 other members of the Committee might be concerned  
25 that the legal community in the 14th Circuit,

1 because of the amount of time that's passed since  
2 you did any work there, and the fact that  
3 majority of your work has happened elsewhere in  
4 South Carolina, hasn't maybe had a full  
5 opportunity to evaluate you, what it's like to  
6 work with you to give us input on your  
7 qualifications through the means that are  
8 available to do that, to the degree we might be  
9 concerned about that, do you think that would be  
10 fair?

11 MS. MOORE: I definitely think that's a fair concern.  
12 It was a concern that I had when I appeared in  
13 front of the Citizens Committee. But I was just  
14 absolutely delighted with what their, what the  
15 response to me was, the treatment of me was  
16 fantastic. Their comments about me are just  
17 wonderful. That was a question that was raised  
18 when I -- I did sit down with the Citizens  
19 Committee, they raised that very issue. But that  
20 having been said, having a statewide practice, I  
21 believe I'm -- and I'm also very pleased with how  
22 the ballot box surveys went in regard to my  
23 peers, really, on a statewide level, having faith  
24 in me and having such kind things to say about  
25 me. But I can certainly understand your concern.

1 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Sure. And again, I  
2 appreciate your candor. And please don't  
3 misunderstand. I'm not trying to minimize at all  
4 the work you've done. You've built a fantastic  
5 professional career and you're to be commended  
6 for that.

7 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

8 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Thank you for your time.

9 MS. MOORE: Thank you so much.

10 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Members of the Commission? Excuse  
11 me. I have a couple of questions as I try to,  
12 you know, divine from someone's PDQ the story of  
13 what has happened in your legal career. There's  
14 a couple of -- I'll use the term non sequiturs  
15 that I'd appreciate your help in understanding.  
16 You graduated from LSU Law School in 2001 and  
17 then were admitted to practice in Louisiana; is  
18 that right?

19 MS. MOORE: That's correct.

20 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: In Louisiana, is there a separate  
21 BAR exam for in-state law school graduates?

22 MS. MOORE: For -- for a separate for in-state?

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: I roughly recall -- and this isn't  
24 dispositive of anything, that in Louisiana,  
25 graduates from law schools in Louisiana are

1 admitted to the Bar. There's not a separate Bar  
2 examination, or am I wrong?

3 MS. MOORE: There is a three-day Bar exam that I  
4 endured, yes, sir. Yes, sir.

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: I fondly remember those days in  
6 South Carolina before we'd been in --

7 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir.

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: The question, though, that really  
9 stood out to me was I noted from your work  
10 history that you indicated you moved to South  
11 Carolina in 2004 and your admission to the Fifth  
12 Circuit Court of Appeals was in May of 2011.  
13 What brought you to the point where you wanted to  
14 practice in the Fifth Circuit? Go ahead.

15 MS. MOORE: Yeah, so as part of my background, I was  
16 a CJA and appellate attorney for many years in  
17 the federal system. And so my desire to become  
18 licensed in the Fifth Circuit was specifically to  
19 see if I could develop further appellate matters  
20 in the federal system, which just really never  
21 materialized. So that was the reason why I  
22 became licensed in the Fifth Circuit.

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: So when were you handling --  
24 because I didn't see that you had done CJA work.  
25 I may've missed it because there's a lot of pages

1 here. But what were you doing to represent  
2 clients in that jurisdiction? When was that in  
3 the timeline you were working with them.

4 MS. MOORE: So I didn't represent any clients. I  
5 believe -- and I'm so sorry, I didn't make a note  
6 of it -- I think it was around 2008 or '9 that I  
7 became a CJA attorney and received appointments  
8 from Fourth Circuit. I've never done any kind of  
9 like district court trial matters in the federal  
10 system. So it was about 2008 or 2009 that I  
11 began accepting CJA appointments in the federal  
12 system. And as you can see, I love appellate  
13 work, absolutely love it to death. And so I  
14 thought, you know, well, maybe let me branch out,  
15 because I am licensed in Louisiana; would that  
16 allow me the opportunity to solicit appointments  
17 in the Fifth Circuit, as well, for appellate  
18 matters. Does that answer your question?

19 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Think so, yes.

20 MS. MOORE: Okay. But it never materialized. I've  
21 never represented anyone in the Fifth Circuit.

22 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Okay.

23 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: The other admission that was  
25 anomalous was the Massachusetts in 2019. What

1           was that about?

2   MS. MOORE:       Yeah, so Massachusetts, you can waive  
3           in. There is, in fact, no Bar exam for someone  
4           with my years and experience in Massachusetts.  
5           And so I had spent a lot of time in the state of  
6           Rhode Island, as well as Massachusetts, on  
7           personal vacations and so it seemed like some  
8           low-hanging fruit that I could just waive in and  
9           get licensed in Massachusetts. In addition, one  
10          of my very, very dear friends and former  
11          colleague, she was from Massachusetts and she and  
12          I had talked about maybe moving to the area at  
13          one point and opening a practice again, which  
14          also never materialized. So those two things  
15          coming together is why I did that.  
16          Unfortunately, the year that I applied and was  
17          licensed in Massachusetts, they did in fact  
18          implement an open-book Bar exam. So I did not  
19          escape the Bar exam totally, but I did pass. But  
20          I think they gave you like five days, or  
21          something like that, but it's all open book. But  
22          I did not have to actually go and memorize  
23          anything.

24   CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   Right.

25   MS. MOORE:        Yeah.

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Good for you. I let Butch Bowers  
2 talk me one time into waiving into the District  
3 of Columbia Bar and now I have to write them a  
4 check every year --

5 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- because I don't have to  
7 disclose that I was a former member of their BAR.

8 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Never practiced law one day.

10 MS. MOORE: Exactly. Exactly, yes, sir.

11 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. I don't have any other  
12 questions. Any members of the Commission? So  
13 with that, that will bring us to the conclusion  
14 of the screening process for this seat, Seat 3.

15 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: I do need to take the opportunity  
17 to remind you pursuant to the Commission's  
18 criteria, we take the letter, as well as the  
19 spirit of our state's ethics laws very seriously,  
20 and we would view any violation or appearance of  
21 impropriety as very serious and potentially  
22 deserving of heavy weight in our screening  
23 deliberations. And so on that note, as you know,  
24 the record will remain open until the formal  
25 release of the qualifications report. And were

1           there cause, we could call you back for further  
2           questioning if that situation or need were to  
3           arise. Do you understand all that?

4           MS. MOORE:     Yes, I do.

5           CHAIRMAN CASKEY:     Wonderful. That will conclude  
6           this service. Thank you for offering. Excuse  
7           me, this will conclude this screening. Thank you  
8           for offering for service to the State of South  
9           Carolina.

10          MS. MOORE:     My pleasure. Thank you.

11          CHAIRMAN CASKEY:     And with that, we will roll  
12          immediately into the separate screening for the  
13          other seat for which you have applied, Seat 4 of  
14          14th Judicial Circuit Family Court, and you are  
15          still Scarlet B. Moore; is that correct?

16          MS. MOORE:     That's correct.

17          CHAIRMAN CASKEY:     Nothing has changed.

18                 Additionally, I would note that John T. Lay is a  
19                 commissioner who is not participating in this  
20                 screening either for this seat. I probably  
21                 should put you under oath again for this separate  
22                 screening. So if you would, please, raise your  
23                 right hand.

24          WHEREUPON:

25                         SCARLET B. MOORE, being duly sworn and

1           cautioned to speak the truth, the whole truth and  
2           nothing but the truth, testifies as follows:

3 CHAIRMAN CASKEY:     All right.  You have already seen  
4           the Personal Data Questionnaire and the Sworn  
5           Statement that you acknowledged and consented to  
6           enter into the record for Seat 3.  Do you so  
7           consent for having all those documents also be  
8           included for Seat 4?

9 MS. MOORE:         I do.

10                                 (EXHIBIT NO. 15 MARKED FOR  
11                                 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (18 pages)  
12                                 PDQ - Scarlet B. Moore)

13                                 (EXHIBIT NO. 16 MARKED FOR  
14                                 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (9 pages)  
15                                 Sworn Statement - Scarlet B.  
16                                 Moore)

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY:     All right.  The same notice that I  
18           provided minutes ago with respect to the process  
19           which we had -- with which we had engaged to  
20           evaluate your candidacy still applies.  And  
21           rather than, again, spend our time on going over  
22           the same materials, do you consent to including  
23           in the record for your screening for Seat 4 all  
24           of the discussions and all the documents as well,  
25           from Seat 3 to apply to Seat 4?

1 MS. MOORE: I do.

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: I'd recognize Representative  
3 Stavrinakis.

4 REPRESENTATIVE STAVRINAKIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
5 Mr. Chairman, I would move with candidate's  
6 consent that we get the complete record for her  
7 screening on Seat 3 and apply it to her  
8 application for Seat 4, and include in that all  
9 of the required legal admonitions and notices  
10 required by law.

11 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: That motion having been seconded  
12 by senator Rankin is now before the Commission.  
13 All in favor signify by saying aye.

14 MEMBERS: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed, nay? The ayes have  
16 it. And it's so ordered. I don't want to deny  
17 you the opportunity, though, as to Seat 4. Is  
18 there anything you'd like to say? We'd be happy  
19 to hear from you.

20 MS. MOORE: I don't have any further -- anything to  
21 say further, but I appreciate the opportunity.  
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Yes, ma'am, thank you very much.

24 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: So that will conclude this

1 screening process for this seat as well. And the  
2 same scary warning with respect to abiding by our  
3 state ethics laws still applies --

4 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir.

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: -- for this seat as well. Do you  
6 understand all that?

7 MS. MOORE: Yes, sir, I do. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Thank you very much.  
9 Thank you for applying. Thank you for being here  
10 today.

11 MS. MOORE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Appreciate you offering your  
13 service. I wish you all the best as you travel  
14 home safely.

15 MS. MOORE: Thank you, my pleasure. Thank you very  
16 much.

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. The motion before the  
18 Commission now is limited to executive session  
19 for a legal briefing, that motion being made by  
20 Senator Rankin and seconded by Representative  
21 Jordan, before the body. All in favor, signify  
22 by saying aye.

23 MEMBERS: Aye.

24 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The ayes have it,  
25 and we will move into executive session for a

1           legal briefing.

2                           (Off the record)

3 Executive Session was held from 1:01 - 2:12 pm

4           CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Good afternoon, ladies  
5           and gentlemen. We will resume with screening  
6           hearings today with the Judicial Merit Selection  
7           Commission. We are coming now out of executive  
8           session in which we receive a legal briefing.  
9           For the record, while we're in executive session,  
10          no decisions were made and no -- let me back up  
11          and say, because it's not clear what was just  
12          reported or not, but we are now going to resume  
13          with the agenda for today. We have come out of  
14          executive session now. For the record, after  
15          having received that legal briefing in executive  
16          session, no decisions were made and no votes were  
17          taken. The pending matter on the agenda for us  
18          is the election of or determination of  
19          qualification of the candidates that were  
20          screened today. And we will proceed to a vote on  
21          that question. The first candidate is a  
22          candidate for a retired Circuit Court -- active  
23          retired circuit court seat, the Honorable Thomas  
24          L. Hughston, Jr. The question being  
25          qualification of Judge Hughston. All in favor of

1 finding qualification signified by raising your  
2 hand and saying aye.

3 MEMBERS: Aye.

4 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. Unanimously  
5 Judge Hughston is found -- Representative Jordan  
6 has indicated that he is exercising the proxy of  
7 Senator Rankin, voting in favor of Judge Hughston  
8 and thus not affecting the result. But still  
9 unanimous. 12 to 0 vote in favor of  
10 qualification of Judge Hughston. Moving down to  
11 the next race in the Family Court, 11th Judicial  
12 Circuit, Seat 4. The first candidate is Elnora  
13 Jones Dean. Question being qualification of Ms.  
14 Dean. All in favor is indicate by raising your  
15 hand and saying aye.

16 MEMBERS: Aye.

17 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The ayes have  
18 it.

19 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Once again voting Senator  
20 Rankin's proxy and also on behalf of Senator  
21 Rankin.

22 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: That being all 12 votes in favor of  
23 qualification. Ms. Dean is found qualified. The  
24 next candidate is Rebecca West. Question being  
25 qualification of Ms. West. All in favor of

1           qualification signify by raising your hand and  
2           saying aye.

3 MEMBERS:   Aye.

4 CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   All opposed Nay.

5 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Also again, Senator Rankin  
6           votes aye.

7 CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   All votes being unanimously in  
8           favor of qualification, Ms. West is found to be  
9           qualified. The next race is in the Family Court,  
10          14th Judicial Circuit, Seat 3. The first  
11          candidate is the Honorable Larry W. Weidner II.  
12          All in favor of qualification of Judge Widener,  
13          indicate by raising your hand and saying aye.

14 MEMBERS:   Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   All opposed? Nay. Representative  
16          Jordan.

17 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Senator Rankin votes aye.

18 CHAIRMAN CASKEY:   All votes being unanimous in favor  
19          of qualification. Then 12 to 0. Judge Weidner  
20          is found qualified. The next candidate in Family  
21          Court, 14th Judicial Circuit, Seat 3 is Scarlet  
22          B. Moore. The question being qualification of  
23          Ms. Moore. All in favor of qualification,  
24          signify by raising your hand and saying aye.

25 MEMBERS:   Aye.

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Sorry. So we can get a count.  
2 Representative Jordan indicating that he has  
3 exercised Senator Rankin's proxy in favor of  
4 qualification. That is eight votes for  
5 qualification. Those opposed to qualification -  
6 - a finding of qualification, indicate by raising  
7 your hand and saying no at this time.

8 MEMBERS: No.

9 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Three votes against  
10 qualification. And I will note again for the  
11 record that Commissioner John T. Lay has not  
12 participated in this election for the Family  
13 Court, 14th Judicial Circuit, Seat 3 or 4. All  
14 right, so Ms. Moore is found qualified. So,  
15 Senator Campsen, did you show something?

16 SENATOR CAMPSEN: Yes, I'd like to express why I voted  
17 not qualified for Scarlet B. Moore, and that is  
18 because of lack of a nexus and presence in the  
19 circuit. She owned no property in the circuit,  
20 had never owned property in the Circuit, never  
21 lived in the Circuit. She lives in Greenville,  
22 according to the documents that she provided to  
23 this body. And so I think there's lack of  
24 sufficient connection to the circuit for her to  
25 be an effective circuit court judge in that

1 circuit in Beaufort county for Family Court

2 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Check. All right, thank you.

3 Thank you, sir. Representative Jordan.

4 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.  
5 Chairman, I'd also like to, for the record to be  
6 noted in that I have voted for qualification of  
7 the candidate. However, I want the record to  
8 reflect a couple things. Number one, that while  
9 it's a technical qualification that I vote for, I  
10 am deeply troubled by the concept of both an  
11 individual running for a seat to which there is,  
12 as Senator Campsen said, a lack of connection in  
13 any way, shape or form. Essentially, I'm  
14 particularly troubled, as I look back to Section  
15 5 on reputation. It talks about, again, in this  
16 situation, not a bad reputation, but what I see  
17 is a lack of reputation. Specifically, it gives  
18 me concern when it talks about soliciting the  
19 Commission, soliciting information from members,  
20 bar, clerks of court and other individuals as to  
21 the candidate. And that's been done here. We  
22 see in the candidate's information. Again, we've  
23 solicited information from the bar, et cetera,  
24 but not the bar of that particular area. And  
25 while that's not specifically denoted, it does

1           trouble me. And so to that extent, while I think  
2           the technical letter of the law has been met, and  
3           that's why I vote for qualification, this is  
4           something I think needs to be looked at,  
5           statutory instruction of what we do. And it  
6           gives me heartburn to say the very, very least.

7   CHAIRMAN CASKEY:    And so, as I understand your  
8           motion, is that those sentiments and those  
9           expressed by Senator from Charleston be  
10          memorialized in our final report on  
11          qualifications of this candidate. Is that right?

12   REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: That's correct. I think that's  
13          the only mechanism in our possession to fully  
14          express to the General assembly the concerns  
15          here.

16   SENATOR CAMPSEN: Mr. Chairman. One other point I'd  
17          like to make is that there were no letters of  
18          reference from within the circuit as well,  
19          because there's no real connection to the  
20          circuit.

21   CHAIRMAN CASKEY:    And so, having interrupted your  
22          motion, Mr. Jordan, I understand your motion  
23          then, to also incorporate the comments that the  
24          senator from Charleston just made.

25   REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: That's correct.

1 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Representative  
2 Stavrinakis having seconded that motion, that  
3 question, adoption of those sentiments in our  
4 final report is the question before the body.  
5 All in favor of, Signify by saying aye.

6 MEMBERS: Aye.

7 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Ayes have it. It is  
8 so ordered. All right, turning now to the next  
9 election or determination of qualification. The  
10 Family Court, 14th Judicial Circuit, Seat 4. The  
11 first candidate is Catherine Webb. The question  
12 being qualification. All those in favor of  
13 finding the qualification, indicate by raising  
14 your hand and saying aye.

15 MEMBERS: Aye.

16 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. Representative  
17 Jordan.

18 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Mr. Chairman, Senator Rankin  
19 votes aye as to Catherine Webb.

20 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Senator Rankin's vote having been  
21 cast as well for qualification by vote 11 to 0.  
22 That is a finding of qualification for Catherine  
23 Webb. Again, I'll just note that Commissioner  
24 John T. Lay has not participated in this  
25 election or determination of qualification.

1           Excuse me. The last candidate is again for the  
2           Family Court, 14th Judicial Circuit, Seat 4.  
3           Scarlet B. Moore. Ms. Moore being the same  
4           person who is a candidate for Seat 3 that we just  
5           discussed. The question is qualification of Ms.  
6           Moore for Seat 4. All in favor of a finding of  
7           qualification signified by raising your hand and  
8           saying aye.

9           MEMBERS:    Aye.

10          CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. Representative  
11          Jordan indicates that Senator Rankin's vote is  
12          cast by proxy in favor of qualification. And  
13          again, the vote in this seat for qualification  
14          for Ms. Moore is a vote of 8 to 3 in favor of  
15          qualification.

16          REPRESENTATIVE STARINAKIS: Mr. Chairman, move to  
17          include the same concern on the committee as was  
18          indicated in Seat 3 with regard to this  
19          candidate. Also in the record for Seat 4.

20          CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Representative Stavrinakis has  
21          moved that we incorporate all of the language  
22          which we just incorporated into the final report  
23          for Ms. Moore with respect to her candidacy in  
24          Seat 3, that it also be reflected in the final  
25          report for Ms. Moore as to Seat 4, if I have all

1 of that right. That motion being before the  
2 body, seconded by Ms. Craig. All in favor,  
3 Signify by saying aye.

4 MEMBERS: Aye.

5 CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed? Nay. The ayes have  
6 it. And that as well, is so ordered. That  
7 brings us to the conclusion of our agenda for  
8 this cycle's Judicial Merit Selection Commission  
9 hearing. I want to take a moment to extend my  
10 thanks to all of the candidates on behalf of the  
11 Commission, all the candidates who offered for  
12 judicial service. Obviously, our system could  
13 not work without their dedication to public  
14 service. And we're grateful for all of that.  
15 I'd also like just to take a minute to thank each  
16 of you on the commission for your hard work, the  
17 time you've taken away from your practices, your  
18 businesses and your families to be here to do  
19 this work. It is oftentimes thankless work. So  
20 I want to make sure to at least be one voice to  
21 say thank you. I know that you don't have to be  
22 here. You choose to be here. You sacrificed to  
23 do it, and I'm grateful for it all. I think  
24 you've meaningfully participated in a way that I  
25 hope sets up the state for better success. More

1 success, I should say. And I also want to thank  
2 our staff who've done all the work. We've heard  
3 time and time again from candidates, the great  
4 work that they see done by our staff counsel.  
5 Ms. Erin Crawford, Lindi Putnam, and all the  
6 other ladies who I don't have my glasses on to  
7 see, as well as Mr. Austin, Mr. Hinson, Ms.  
8 Crater, Mr. Umstead over there, Ms. Starnes, Ms.  
9 Cole. Yeah. Anybody else I can see over there.  
10 All right. I'm going to miss somebody. If I did,  
11 Ms. Hall, Ms. Trask, Ms. Starnes, Ms. Adler, Ms.  
12 Baker, Rico, Ms. Kathryn, Senate security. And I  
13 thank you all because it means something and not  
14 just that you're here. I wanted to just say all  
15 the things that we don't necessarily recognize  
16 that don't just happen. Like that's you guys who  
17 are making sure the computers are set up, the  
18 files are organized, that the things are cleaned  
19 up and tidied up, that the food is set up and  
20 taken down, that the candidate logistics are  
21 done, the copies of all the documents, the crazy  
22 fires that get lit, counting votes, taking notes,  
23 all that. And then also for the work to come.  
24 Right, because this is not the end of the  
25 process. I just want to thank you all for that.

1           It's been a privilege to be here with you all and  
2           so thank you. It's my best version of trying to  
3           say nice things.

4   SENATOR CAMPSEN: I'd like to say that you did a  
5           wonderful job.

6   CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Oh, let's put that on the record.

7   SENATOR CAMPSEN: We'll strike that from the record.

8   CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Thank you.

9   SENATOR CAMPSEN: Seriously, you did a wonderful job.

10   CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you. With that, no further  
11           business being before the Commission, we will  
12           stand adjourned. Thank you.

13           (There being no further questions, the hearings  
14           concluded at 2:25 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, KATHRYN BOSTROM, COURT REPORTER AND NOTARY PUBLIC  
IN AND FOR THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA AT LARGE, HEREBY  
CERTIFY THAT I REPORTED THE HEARINGS ON THURSDAY, THE 20TH  
DAY OF NOVEMBER 2025, THAT THE WITNESS WAS FIRST DULY SWORN  
BY ME AND THAT THE FOREGOING 152 PAGES CONSTITUTE A TRUE  
AND CORRECT TRANSCRIPTION OF MY STENOMASK REPORT OF SAID  
DEPOSITION.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I AM NEITHER ATTORNEY NOR  
COUNSEL FOR, NOR RELATED TO OR EMPLOYED BY ANY OF THE  
PARTIES CONNECTED WITH THIS ACTION, NOR AM I FINANCIALLY  
INTERESTED IN SAID CAUSE.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT THE ORIGINAL OF SAID TRANSCRIPT  
WAS THEREAFTER SEALED BY ME AND DELIVERED TO ERIN CRAWFORD,  
GRESSETTE BUILDING, 1101 PENDLETON STREET, COLUMBIA, SOUTH  
CAROLINA, WHO WILL RETAIN THIS SEALED ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT  
AND SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR FILING SAME WITH THE COURT  
PRIOR TO TRIAL OR ANY HEARING WHICH MIGHT RESULT IN A FINAL  
ORDER ON ANY ISSUE.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE SET MY HAND AND SEAL THIS  
5th DAY OF JANUARY 2025.



\_\_\_\_\_  
KATHRYN B. BOSTROM, COURT REPORTER  
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES AUGUST 23, 2032

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