



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

Family Court
(New Candidate)

Full Name: Catherine A. Webb

Business Address: Beaufort County Family Court, 102 Ribaut Road, Post Office Drawer 1124, Beaufort, SC 29901

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

Family Court has been the focus of my legal career, and I've seen firsthand how deeply the court's decisions impact the lives of children, parents, and families. With the experience I've gained, I believe I can serve from the bench with both knowledge, fairness and compassion. My goal is to serve our community.

2. Do you plan to serve your full term if elected?

Yes.

3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day?

No.

4. Have you met the statutory requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice?

Yes.

5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?

As a general rule, *ex parte* communications are typically not tolerated in that they undermine fairness and impartiality. Generally speaking, A judge should not initiate, permit, or consider *ex parte* communications. There are a few situations where I believe an *ex-*

parte communication may be necessary or appropriate in Family Court. For example, there may be a need for a restraining order. These orders may be granted on an *ex parte* basis. Temporary emergency custody may also require an *ex parte* communication. If there is a substantial risk of harm to a minor child, it may be necessary to engage in an *ex parte* communication which results in an Order. An Order may be required by a party to protect a child from harm before the Court has an opportunity to hear from the opposing party. Circumstances may require *ex parte* communications for scheduling or administrative purposes. This would be allowed if it remained unprejudicial to all parties, and neither party would gain any advantage as a result of such communication. This would require the judge immediately notify the other side of said communication and allows the opposing party an opportunity to respond.

6. If you disclosed something that had the appearance of bias, but you believed it would not actually prejudice your impartiality, what deference would you give a party that requested your recusal? Would you grant such a motion?

I would disclose the issue to the litigants. If one of the parties reasonably questioned my impartiality, then I would likely recuse myself. I believe that the appearance of fairness is critical in maintaining the reputation of the Courts.

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

If there was an appearance of impropriety, I would disclose it and likely recuse myself.

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

As a general rule I believe all judges need to be concerned with accepting gifts from third parties. A gift, bequest, favor or loan may be perceived as an attempt to influence the judge as laid out in Canon 4. A gift or invitation to attend a bar-related event or activity devoted to the improvement of the law or the legal system would be appropriate. Ordinary social hospitality is okay as well as gifts for special events such as one's birthday. If the gift may be perceived as an attempt to influence me or the gift is excessive for the occasion,

then it would not be appropriate to accept such gift. A judge should not accept a gift from lawyers or firms if they are likely to come before the judge or have clients that may come before the judge. I would also caution my husband and children from accepting gifts.

9. How would you handle a situation in which you became aware of misconduct or appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or of a fellow judge?

I would report it to the appropriate resource. If there was a lawyer in my community struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues, I may communicate with that lawyer directly and refer them to Lawyers Helping Lawyers.

10. Are you a member of any organization or association that, by policy or practice, prohibits or limits its membership on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin? If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis.

No.

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

No.

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

I have a small business in Beaufort County which handles guest stays for out-of-town guests vacationing on Fripp Island. My husband is also involved as a Licensed Real Estate agent. This is a small family business. We are not responsible for booking, just guest care. I would likely step away from this business.

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

Fourteenth Judicial Circuit does have a Family Court Law Clerk. I am currently the Law Clerk for the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. Even if we did not have a Law Clerk, I would prioritize timely orders. I would try

and take excellent notes, rule from the bench when possible, and draft orders as soon as possible, following hearings. I am aware of the importance of timely orders for Juveniles, private actions, and DSS matters. I managed a large family law practice for many years, which was driven by deadlines and drafting orders in a timely manner.

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

I would express the importance of deadlines to our staff. In private practice I was responsible for managing our staff and have years of experience working with my team to ensure timely compliance with discovery and other deadlines. Communication is key. I also believe that it is critical to create a team environment with your staff, with each member understanding their role, the expectations and their value. We would also utilize calendaring systems to ensure timely responses.

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

As a judge, I would incorporate the requirements of the GAL statute into my orders to put everyone on notice. I would encourage the GAL to provide his/her reports in a timely manner in compliance with the statute. I would also add provisions in the Order to encourage parents and alert the parents that they are required to comply with the *Guardian ad Litem*, including providing all necessary information and documentation.

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

I believe that the role of a Judge is to interpret law and apply law impartiality. I am not a judicial activist. I leave activism to elected legislators.

17. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. What activities would you plan to undertake to further this improvement of the legal system?

I would consider participating in and promoting legal education program.

18. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge would strain personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)? How would you plan to address this?

No. Practicing family law and being a Guardian *ad Litem* for children living in the most horrific conditions has been a part of mine and my family's life for over twenty years. We are a very close family. My husband and adult children are very supportive of me in good times and bad times, and I hope I am for them as well. We have a strong faith, good communication, and lots of animals to fill our hearts and home when we are feeling pressure and stress.

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

I have been involved in many cases where there was at least one pro se litigant. I have been most impressed with our Judges who are respectful to the pro se litigant, including being patient and fair. I have witnessed a judge who was quick tempered and frustrated with a pro se party, this conduct appeared to really demean the profession. I believe the Court has an obligation to maintain order, but always remain patient. Although pro se litigants are expected to follow same procedures as attorneys, I do believe that it is important for judges to offer reasonable accommodations to ensure a fair hearing.

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

No.

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

No.

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

Yes, I have met the mandatory minimum hours requirement.

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

A Judge should have a demeanor that is impartial, respectful and patient, but firm. A judge, at all times, should exhibit fairness with all of the sensitive issues relating to both private action and DSS actions, as well as juvenile matters.

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

No. I never feel that it is appropriate for a Judge to exhibit any anger with a member of the public.

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

OWBw

Sworn to before me this 22 day of April, 2025.

(Signature)

Tanya Petrelli

(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: 10.05.2032