

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

Family Court
(New Candidate)

Full Name: William Gregory Seigler
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1. Why do you want to serve as a Family Court Judge?

As I stated when I was a candidate for Family Court At Large Seat 2 last year, I am a married father of three and I have always had a great desire to be a family court judge. I focused on Family Law while managing my own law firm for ten years. I feel that I have a good judicial temperament and that I would be a dedicated, fair, and impartial judge that would be a positive influence and make a difference in people's lives. In addition, the grand opportunity to be a family court judge would allow me to continue to improve and serve my community and state. Again, with all humility I have handled every type of case in family court, and I feel I possess each and every quality necessary to be a good family court judge. I was also a municipal court judge for three years and I believe that experience would also assist me as a family court judge.

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

Yes.

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

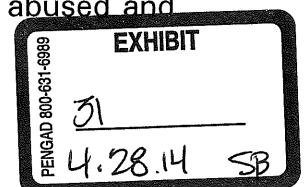
No

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

Yes.

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

I think that the rules of ex parte communications are set forth clearly in Canon 3, Rule 501, SCARC. Paraphrasing the said canon, "A judge shall not permit ex parte communications..." It clearly says that all parties and their lawyers shall be included with any communications with the judge. Canon 3 is clear and I would not allow it. However, there are certain exceptions when expressly authorized to do so. For example, it is permissible when considering the issuance of a temporary order related to child custody and support where conditions warrant, or in considering cases involved abused and



neglected children, and emergency protective orders that involve danger to abuse and neglect. However, I feel that even if a family court judge decides to issue an ex parte order or to consider ex parte information then a hearing should be held immediately and the opposing party should be given every opportunity to present his case without prejudice. I would consider an ex parte communications only in the most extreme situations and make absolutely certain they were considered pursuant to strict adherence to the cannons rules.

6. What is your philosophy on recusal, especially in situations in which lawyer-legislators, former associates, or law partners are to appear before you?

The rules in this area provide very specific times when a judge must recuse himself. Canon 3(e) says that judge must recuse himself if his impartiality might reasonably be questioned. It is very clear when dealing with the situation that includes former associates and law partners. It simply states that you do not have to recuse yourself unless the former partner handled the case at the time the judge was his partner. In regards to the lawyer-legislator, unless you have a personal relationship or prior association with the lawyer-legislator, there is no reason for a judge to recuse himself. The rules are clear, but my position would be that if there is any reason to believe that an issue of impartiality may be raised then that should be disclosed on the records to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

7. 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?

Out of extreme caution I would probably grant the motion. A judge has to consider how gravely important it is that our system of justice maintain the utmost appearance of fairness and impartiality. Obviously, each case would be considered subjectively, but based on the limited information in the question I would grant the motion.

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

Again, at the risk of being repetitive, the cannons are clear. If there was a situation involving the appearance of impropriety because of financial or social involvement of my wife or relative I would recuse myself as a judge on the case.

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

Based on my reading of Canon 4 there are certain situations where it appears it would be appropriate to accept gifts; however, my personal position would be not to accept any gifts from anyone unless it was family, unless that family member is an attorney who practices

before me. I would decline any gifts, loans, or favors from that person/attorney or any other person who could possibly appear before me as a judge.

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

Canon 3 basically says that if a judge has knowledge that a lawyer violated the Rules of Professional Conduct or another member of the judiciary violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, then in either event he will notify the "appropriate authority." As a judge I feel that you have to abide by the rules and the code when placed in this situation.

11. Are you affiliated with any political parties, boards or commissions that, if you were elected, would need to be evaluated?

No.

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

No.

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

If both parties in the action had lawyers I would have the attorney for the moving party to prepare the order immediately, and allow opposing counsel to review the order before sending it to me for signing. If there is only one lawyer involved in the action I would have him/her prepare the order. Of course, in either situation I would carefully track the time frame when the order was due, and once received carefully review the said order for accuracy. As a strict disciplinarian and stickler for paying attention to detail, I would ensure that the order was delivered to me in a timely fashion. My experience has shown me that some judges draft orders in certain situations. I do not feel that the judge should draft an order unless it absolutely necessary. I do feel the judge should correct orders for accuracy, but a judge should draft an order only under extreme circumstances. For example, if a judge makes a decision that would include specific findings made by that judge then drafting the order would be appropriate.

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

I would use similar method that I used while in private practice. I use electronic calendars that inform me of deadlines. The advice of judges on the bench would be invaluable in this area, and I would try to utilize their advice and suggestions.

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 the Commission is aware, I represented the South Carolina Guardian ad Litem program from many years, I was also a Guardian ad Litem in many private cases. To be candid, I have rarely had any problems with compliance to the statute. To avoid confusion, I would not use a vague provision in the order. I would be specific in regards to timeframes, deadlines, bills etc.

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

The rules state that a family court judge should follow the law. I do not feel that a judge should in any way be influence by outside factors. A family court judge should apply the law and try to avoid an attempt to create the law.

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 encourage, engage, and participate in certain public forums and continuing legal education. It is impossible to create a complete separation between being a judge and extra-judicial activities.

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?

I do not feel it would strain my personal relationships in a negative manner. I do have three handsome young sons and a wonderful wife that I miss when I am away, but I have accepted that as a lawyer it is unavoidable. I am in court all the time and my family understands my duties. My wife and I are fortunate that she is able to stay at home with our sons. So, I do not feel that any additional stress will affect me or my relationships.

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

I believe that you have to give special consideration to pre se litigants. Obviously, you would have to explain to the pro se litigant that he/she would be held to the standard of a lawyer even though they do not have the skills of a lawyer. I do feel that you should apply special attention to the pro se litigant. You as judge may be the only judge he/she ever sees in his life, so I think you have to appear fair, impartial and with the utmost integrity. Justice is suppose to be blind, with or without counsel, and I think every litigant should leave the court room believing in that principal.

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. Do you belong to any organizations that discriminate based on race, religion, or gender?
No.
23. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses?
Yes.
24. What percentage of your legal experience (including experience as a special appointed judge or referee) concerns the following areas? If you do not have experience in one of these areas, can you suggest how you would compensate for that particular area of practice?
- a. Divorce and equitable distribution: 30%
 - b. Child custody: 35%
 - c. Adoption: 5%
 - d. Abuse and neglect: 10%
 - e. Juvenile cases: 20%
25. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge?
I was a municipal court judge for three years and I never had any problem with any defendant. When you treat people fairly and with respect and honesty no matter what walk of life they come from, you do not have problems. I understand that being a family court judge is not the same as being a municipal court judge, but in my opinion you should have the same demeanor no matter what type of judge you might be. Be honest, fair, calm, polite and focused on the task at hand, and everything else will take care of itself.
26. Would the rules that you expressed in your previous answer apply only while you are on the bench or in chambers, or would these rules apply seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day?
For me the rules I expressed have applied to me in my every day life both at home and in the courtroom for many years. It has been my own personal rule before I began practicing law.
27. 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. As I stated earlier I am a strict disciplinarian so as a family court judge I would demand appropriate conduct from anyone in the courtroom, but I do not feel that anger is appropriate nor effective.
28. How much money have you spent on your campaign? If the amount is over \$100, has that been reported to the House and Senate Ethics Committees?
N/A

29. If you are a sitting judge, have you used judicial letterhead or the services of your staff while campaigning for this office?
N/A
30. Have you sought or received the pledge of any legislator prior to this date?
No.
31. Have you sought or been offered a conditional pledge of support by any legislator pending the outcome of your screening?
No.
32. Have you asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf before the final and formal screening report has been released? Are you aware of any friends or colleagues contacting members of the General Assembly on your behalf?
No.
33. Have you contacted any members of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission?
No.
34. Are you familiar with the 48-hour rule, which prohibits a candidate from seeking pledges for 48 hours after the draft report has been submitted?
Yes.

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

s/William G. Seigler

Sworn to before me this 9th day of March, 2014.

Jennifer Seigler

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: 10/25/15