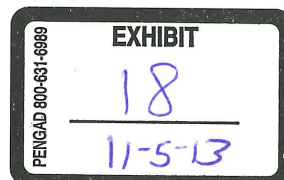


JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION
Sworn Statement to be included in Transcript of Public Hearings

Family Court
(Incumbent)

Full Name: Ronald Ray Norton
Business Address: P.O. Box 1147
Conway, South Carolina 29528
Business Telephone: 843-915-8997

1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court Judge?
I believe I have the judicial temperament, knowledge and character to carry out the duties required for the job. I enjoy interaction with the attorneys and litigants. I am devoted to the position and feel I am contributing positively to the judiciary and the State of South Carolina.
2. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-elected? Yes
3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day?
I have no plans to return to private practice at this time.
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?
Ex parte communications should always be the exception not the rule. Any request for an ex parte communication should be examined carefully. Are there circumstances under which you could envision ex parte communications being tolerated? Circumstances for which such communication may be tolerated would include instances where there is the threat of severe harm or injury, especially where children are involved. Even then any ex parte order should be limited in time and a hearing should be scheduled so all parties can be heard on the issues.
6. What is your philosophy on recusal, especially in situations in which lawyer-legislators, former associates, or law partners are to appear before you?
I see no reason for recusal when lawyer-legislators appear in court with the caveat that if the lawyer-legislator is your Senator or Representative recusal may be appropriate to avoid any appearance of impropriety. Recusal for other lawyer-legislators may be required if there is a conflict other than just being a lawyer-legislator. Recusal when there is an appearance by a former associate or law partner should be considered again to avoid the appearance of impropriety. Obviously, recusal would need to be determined on a case by case



basis with any disclosures on the record with all parties having an opportunity to state their position.

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?

In almost all instances where there is the appearance of bias I would err on the side of caution and recuse myself from the case. I believe the failure to do so would have the potential of bringing the judiciary into disfavor. I would grant the request if legitimate. Of course every request for recusal should be carefully analyzed to determine if it is legitimate or simply an attempt to judge shop.

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

Disclosure is usually the method to avoid any appearance of impropriety giving parties the opportunity to address any issue. I would do this on the record.

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

I do not accept gifts. I would decline social hospitality from anyone having matters pending before the court. I have attended weddings, funerals and special events for attorneys and their families but would not construe this as a conflict.

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

As a judge I believe it is mandatory to report misconduct. I would first address the issue with the attorney or fellow judge to see if they would self-report.

11. Are you affiliated with any political parties, boards or commissions which, if you were re-elected, would need to be re-evaluated? No.

12. Do you have any business activities that you have remained involved with since your election to the bench? No.

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

Generally, I instruct one of the attorneys to prepare a draft order and forward it to the opposing attorney for review before submitting it to the court. If there is a disagreement I will then have a conference to address the dispute. I have also prepared my own order when necessary.

14. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

On a weekly basis, my administrative assistant and I review the status of pending matters. We allow sufficient lead time to meet deadlines when due and have been successful in keeping up with

these matters barring any unforeseen emergency. On the first of each month we review the matters of the previous month to make sure we have not overlooked anything.

15. What specific actions or steps do you take to ensure that the guidelines of the Guardian Ad Litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case?

First, I make sure the Guardian Ad Litem is qualified and has completed the guardian training. Then I make sure all investigations have been completed and all reports are filed and available. In contested matters I will allow questioning of the guardian.

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

The role of the judiciary is to interpret the law and apply law to the facts of each case.

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

I have spoken at seminars on legal issues and procedures and will continue to do so. I have and continue to participate in the South Carolina Bar Association's Middle and High School Mock Trial Program. I served on the South Carolina Supreme Court's Docket Management Task Force, February 2011 – November 2012, helping to improve the efficiency of the court system. I am a member of the South Carolina Family Court Bench Bar Committee and will continue to serve as long as needed.

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

No. I am blessed to have a loving and understanding wife of 40 years. She is fully supportive of my position on the court. I have two grown, married children living in other states and while we visit as often as possible, my job has never interfered with our relationship.

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

No.

20. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a de minimis financial interest in a party involved? No.

21. Do you belong to any organizations that discriminate based on race, religion, or gender? No.

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

23. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge?

Attentive, calm, unbiased, fair, firm when necessary, compassionate.

24. Do the rules that you expressed in your previous answer apply only while you are on the bench or in chambers, or do these rules apply seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day?

I feel my demeanor is the same seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day.

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

It is never appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, an attorney or a pro se litigant. It may be necessary to be firm and stern but not angry.

26. How much money have you spent on your campaign? If it is over \$100, has that amount been reported to the House and Senate Ethics Committees?

I purchased a pack of copy paper to print the application.

27. While campaigning for this office, have you used judicial letterhead or the services of your staff for your campaign?

I used judicial letterhead and the office fax machine to acknowledge receipt of the Application. My Administrative Assistant has helped in the preparation of the application but this was not done during work hours.

28. Have you sought or received the pledge of any legislator prior to this date? No.

29. Have you sought or been offered a conditional pledge of support by any legislator pending the outcome of your screening? No.

30. 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.

31. Have you contacted any members of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission? No.

32. 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/Ronald R. Norton

Sworn to before me this 26th day of July, 2013.

Julia Ann Guyton

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: June 29, 2016