

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

Family Court
(New Candidate)

Full Name: Coreen B. Khoury
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1. Why do you want to serve as a Family Court Judge?
I have been a family court lawyer in the Sixth Judicial Circuit for twenty eight years. I believe that I possess the knowledge, experience, and skill set to be an effective family court judge and serve the general and legal community of the Sixth Judicial Circuit.
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?
If I am elected to serve as family court judge and continue to be re-elected at the expiration of each term, I will not return to private practice.
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 would not initiate, permit or consider *ex parte* communications unless permitted by the Judicial Code of Conduct or authorized by law. *Ex parte* communications and actions may be tolerated if they involve the health or safety of a child or litigant and the prompt opportunity to be heard on the matter is afforded all parties to the matter.
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 would disqualify myself in any situation in which I question or any attorney or participant questions my impartiality for good cause. I would not disqualify myself in cases involving lawyer-legislators, former associates or former law partners unless I had a professional or personal connection with the participant, the issues to be tried or otherwise required to do so by the Judicial Code of Conduct or by law.



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?

If I disclosed something that had the appearance of bias and a party requested my recusal, I would grant the motion and disqualify myself even if I did not believe the disclosure would prejudice my impartiality. If my impartiality is reasonably questioned, I believe the best policy would be to disqualify myself from hearing the matter.

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

I would disclose the nature of the financial or social involvement of my spouse or close relative and if I, the attorneys or the litigants believed my impartiality could reasonably be questioned, I would disqualify myself from hearing the matter.

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

I would not accept gifts or social hospitality unless allowed pursuant to Canon 4D (5) (a)-(i) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

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

I am required to take the appropriate action if I become aware of the misconduct of a lawyer or a fellow judge. Appropriate action would include direct communication with the lawyer or judge, other direct action if available and reporting the violation to the appropriate authority, agency or body.

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?

I would draft short form Orders, Pro Se Support Orders, and Pro Se Decrees of Divorce. In cases involving attorneys, I would issue findings of facts and conclusions of law and ask one of the attorneys in the case to draft a proposed Order. I would ask the attorney preparing the Order to submit the Order to the opposing attorney or party before submitting it to me for my review. Once the Order was submitted to me, I would review the Order and if it complies with my ruling sign and file the Order with the Family Court.

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

I would use a calendaring system that would alert me to when deadlines were approaching. I would ask staff to notify lawyers of Orders that were due and outstanding.

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?

I would appoint Guardians who were experienced, well trained and familiar with the requirements of the Guardian Ad Litem statutes.

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

Judges are charged with enforcing the laws and insuring that the laws of the State are being adhered to by the legal and general community at large and not making laws or promoting public policies. However, judges are in a unique position to observe how the application of outdated laws or policies can create adverse consequences for litigants. I believe that judges can be valuable resources of information and experiences to groups charged with promoting and drafting new laws or policies or discontinuing archaic laws or policies.

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 have no planned activities but would do whatever I was called upon to do to improve the legal system. As a judge, I would be diligent and industrious in the handling of my duties. I would calmly, courteously and willingly listen to all sides of a controversy. These actions would assist in the promotion of a positive image for the legal system on a daily basis.

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 have served as a family court lawyer for twenty eight years in a relatively small community and the pressures of my job have not strained my personal relationships with family or friends. Over the years, I have tried very hard to separate my personal life from my professional life. I have tried to leave work at work and home at home. Family, friends, clients and opposing counsel have done a great job of understanding and honoring these boundaries. I would continue to behave in the same fashion and with the same expectations if elected to serve as a family court judge.

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

I would assist *pro se* litigants in the procedures of family court and help them understand the requirements of family courts.

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?

Yes, unless one of the lawyers or litigants questioned my impartiality after disclosure of the information.

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: 90% of my cases involve the issues of divorce and equitable distribution.

b Child custody: 60% of my cases involve the issue of child custody but only half of these cases will include contested matters of custody.

c Adoption: 5% of my cases involve the issue of adoption.

d Abuse and neglect: 25% of my cases are abuse and neglect cases.

e Juvenile cases: 0% of my cases involve juvenile matters. I am the appointed Juvenile Drug Court Judge for Lancaster County. We have Drug Court three to four times per month. We can have anywhere from two hearings to fifteen hearings per session depending on the number of participants in the program.

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

A judge should set the tone of the courtroom by being calm and courteous. A judge should treat all lawyers, litigants, other courtroom participants and courthouse personnel with respect. A judge should be fair and impartial in his /her rulings. A judge should be attentive to all matter before him/her and in control of his/her courtroom.

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?

The same rules would apply seven days a week, twenty four hours a day.

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?

There may be occasions where it is appropriate to be angry with a person making an appearance in court, a pro se litigant or attorney. It would not be appropriate, however, for this anger to influence a judicial decision.

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?

I have not spent any money on my campaign.

29. If you are a sitting judge, have you used judicial letterhead or the services of your staff while campaigning for this office? Not Applicable
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/Coreen B. Khoury

Sworn to before me this 23 day of July, 2013.

Ally W. Whitaker

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: 3/16/2020