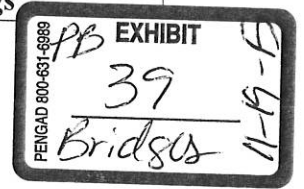


**JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION**  
**Sworn Statement to be included in Transcript of Public Hearings**

**Family Court**  
**(Incumbent)**



Full Name: The Honorable Usha J. Bridges  
Business Address: P.O. Box 8036, Gaffney South Carolina 29342  
125 E. Floyd Baker Blvd., Gaffney, South Carolina 29340  
Business Telephone: (864) 487-2568

1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court Judge?  
I came on the bench with the mindset that I can make a difference. Having served five of my six years, I know that I can and do make difference in the lives of many. I enjoy my job and I would love to continue in my capacity as a judge and my quest to do the right thing in the lives of many, especially children.
2. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-elected?  
I do plan to serve a full term if re-elected.
3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day?  
I have no plans to return to private practice.
4. Have you met the statutory requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice?  
I am currently 54 years of old, a life-long residence of Cherokee County, South Carolina and practiced law for seventeen years before being appointed to my first term. Yes, I meet the statutory requirements for this position.
5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?  
Should not engage in ex-parte communications except under defined guidelines of Canon 3B(7)(a) which allows the facilitation of scheduling and other administrative purposes and to accommodate emergencies and Canon3B(7)(b) which allows advice oral or written from disinterested expert on the law providing the parties involved are inform or seeking advice and opportunity to respond to oral or written communications.
6. What is your philosophy on recusal, especially in situations in which lawyer-legislators, former associates, or law partners are to appear before you?  
Lawyer-legislators are treated as lawyer and the fact that he or she may be a legislator has no bearing on my rulings. As I was in a solo practice, I have no former associates or law partners.
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?  
I have no problem recusing myself. If I feel the request was being made to undermine due process, I would subsequently address that also.
8. How do you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative?

- I would disclose the involvement and recuse myself due to fact of reasonably questionable association.
9. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality?  
As I have been a Summary Court Judge and Family Court Judge, I understand the importance of myself and family not accepting gifts or social hospitality because it might be construed as debt obligation to the giver.
10. How do you handle a situation in which you became aware of misconduct of a lawyer or of a fellow judge?  
The misconduct must be disclosed and the Office of Disciplinary Counsel will have to address the situation.
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?  
I issue instructions, instruct one lawyer to draft the order and require the other lawyer to review and approve the order before it is submitted to me for my signature.
14. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?  
I have a wonderful secretary, who places everything on her calendar and my calendar. Additionally, she keeps up with outstanding orders and calls attorneys to remind them of outstanding orders.
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?  
I would communicate the required expectations of compliance of judicial responsibilities with an emphasis on confidentiality, diligence, bias, and prejudice in performance of their official duties. I would question Guardian ad Litem utilizing written reports to ensure proper performance of their duties relating to assessment of facts.
16. What is your philosophy on “judicial activism,” and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy?  
I do not think that judges have a role in setting or promoting public policy. Our job is to ensure that the rules and statutes which are enacted are followed. We cannot and should not interject our personal bias.
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?  
Since becoming a Judge, I have had the opportunity to speak at various churches and schools. I have also been privileged to serve on committees and commissions as well as bar activities. I plan to continue on the various committees and I always look forward to speaking to children so that I hopefully will not see them before me in court.

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?  
I do not feel that my personal relationships are strained as a result of me being a Judge.
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?  
I would not hear a case where a member or I held *de minimis* financial interest to avoid appearance of impropriety.
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?  
The demeanor of a Judge is significant in establishing a climate of respect, trust and fairness. Therefore, I believe a judge should possess the specific characteristics such as trustworthy, confidence, courteous, patience, reliable, punctual, and even temper.
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?  
The rules expressed should apply seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day. Personal and professional conduct should correlate reflecting who you are on or off the bench.
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?  
As we are all human and may get angry, emotional behavior is not consistent with responsibility to perform with impartially and fairly. Therefore, it is imperative to have a self awareness of internal emotions in order not to react to situations from a personal emotional bias be it a member of public or attorney. If someone may appear before me and I have emotional bias, I am obligated to recuse myself.
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?  
\$.0.
27. While campaigning for this office, have you used judicial letterhead or the services of your staff for your campaign?  
No.
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/ Usha J. Bridges

Sworn to before me this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of August, 2015.

Tammy B. Humphries

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: 08/15/2024