

JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION  
PERSONAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE



Court, Position, and Seat # for which you are applying: Family Court, Tenth Judicial Circuit,  
Seat 2

1. Name: The Honorable Karen F. Ballenger  
Are you currently serving in some capacity as a judge? Family Court Judge  
Business Address: PO Box 487 (mailing address)  
205 West Main Street (physical address)  
Walhalla, SC 29691  
Telephone Number: (office): (864) 638-4290
2. Date of Birth: 1957  
Place of Birth: Mullins, SC
3. Are you a citizen of South Carolina? Yes  
Have you been a resident of this state for at least the immediate past five years? Yes
5. Family Status: Divorced in 1981 (to the best of my recollection), Dominican Republic. Approximately one year later, I became concerned about the validity of the divorce. So, I filed a divorce action in Horry County, SC. The information pertaining to this divorce is as follows: Divorced in March 30, 1982, Horry Co., SC Family Court, Karen F. Ballenger (at that time, Karen F. Mincey) was the moving party, One Year's Continuance Separation. Divorced on April 1, 2011, Tenth Judicial Circuit, State of SC, Continuance Separation for more than one year. Karen F. Ballenger was the moving party. One child.
6. Have you served in the military? No
7. List each college and law school you attended, including the dates of your attendance, the degrees you received, and if you left an institution without receiving a degree, the reason for your departure.
  - (a) College: University of SC  
Dates of Attendance: Summer 1975 to August 1978  
Degree: BS, Major: Computer Science;
  - (b) Law School: University of SC School of Law  
Date of Attendance: 1984 to 1987  
Degree: JD.
8. List the states in which you have been admitted to practice law and the year of each admission. Also list any states in which you took the bar exam but were never admitted to the practice of law. If you took the bar exam more than once in any of the states listed, please indicate the number of times you took the exam in each state.  
SC. I was admitted to practice in this state on November 24, 1987.
9. List the significant activities in which you took part during your attendance at college, graduate, and law school. Give the dates you were involved in these activities and list any leadership positions you held.  
None
10. Describe your continuing legal or judicial education during the past five years.

<u>Conference/CLE Name</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>
(a) 2010 Guardian Ad Litem Update	01/29/2010;
(b) Legal Education Seminar	03/19/2010;

- |     |   |             |
|-----|---|-------------|
| (c) | 2010 Hot Tips from the Coolest Domestic Practitioners | 10/01/2010; |
| (d) | 2011 Guardian Ad Litem                                | 01/28/2011; |
| (e) | Ethics Seminar  | 03/11/2011; |
| (f) | 2011 Family Law Intensive                             | 10/02/2011; |
| (g) | Family Court Bench/Bar                                | 12/02/2011; |
| (h) | Legal Education Seminar                               | 04/13/2012; |
| (i) | 2012 Orientation for New Judges                       | 05/30/2012; |
| (j) | Family Court Bench Bar                                | 12/07/2012; |
| (k) | 2013 Annual Judicial Conference                       | 08/21/2013; |
| (l) | 2013 Family Court Bench Bar                           | 12/06/2013; |
| (m) | Family Law Section                                    | 01/24/2014; |
| (n) | Family Court Judges Conference                        | 04/28/2014; |
| (o) | The Indian Welfare Act and Child Welfare              | 06/27/2014; |
| (p) | 2014 Annual Convention                                | 08/07/2014; |
| (q) | 2014 Annual Judicial Conference                       | 08/20/2014; |
| (r) | 2014 Family Court Bench Bar                           | 12/05/2014; |
| (s) | Family Law Section                                    | 01/23/2015; |
| (t) | Family Court Judges Conference                        | 04/16/2015. |
11. Have you taught law-related courses or lectured at bar association conferences, educational institutions, or continuing legal or judicial education programs?
- (a) I was an instructor in domestic law at Columbia Junior College in the paralegal program in the summer of 1988;
- (b) I was a presenter at a conference held at the Sheraton in Columbia, SC. The subject matter of the conference was legal issues relating to child abuse and neglect. At the time of the presentation, I was the attorney for the Oconee County guardian ad litem program. The audience consisted of lay guardians, Department of Social Services workers, and attorneys. To the best of my recollection, the seminar was sponsored by the SC Children's Law Center. I have not been able to locate any information as to the date of the course. I contacted the Children's Law Center but was not able to get the information regarding the seminar since I could not give them the identifying information for the conference.
12. List all published books and articles you have written and give citations and the dates of publication for each.  
None
13. List all courts in which you have been admitted to practice and list the dates of your admission. Give the same information for administrative bodies that require a special admission to practice.
- (a) SC, 1987. My name at the time of my admission was Karen Paige Fowler;
- (b) US District Court for the District of SC, 1992.
14. Describe chronologically your legal experience since graduation from law school and include a list of all law firms with which you have been associated. Describe the general character of your practice and divide it into periods with dates if its character has changed over the years.
- (a) Kennedy, Price & Dial, Columbia, SC, 1987 until June, 1988. My duties included research and drafting of pleadings and other legal documents; assisting in trial preparation; maintaining client contact; and a limited amount of real estate work;

- (b) Judicial Law Clerk, June 1988 to January 1990.  
 The Honorable Carol Connor, Resident Circuit Judge for the Fifth Judicial Circuit. Judge Connor had recently been elected as circuit court judge, and she needed a clerk for the summer. As Judge Connor's law clerk, my duties included overseeing the docket, performing legal research, reviewing orders, and order preparation;  
 The Honorable Marion H. Kinon. After clerking for Judge Connor, Judge Marion H. Kinon asked me to serve as his law clerk for approximately 6 weeks while his law clerk was in training with the SC National Guard;  
 The Honorable William Howard Ballenger. In October of 1988, the Honorable William Howard Ballenger, Resident Circuit Court Judge of the Tenth Judicial Circuit, offered me a position as his law clerk. During my time as Judge Ballenger's law clerk, he presided over two death penalty cases. I was employed as Judge Ballenger's law clerk until January of 1990;
- (c) Ross, Stoudemire & Awde, P.A., Seneca, SC, Associate, 1990. In July of 1992, I became a named partner in the firm – Ross, Stoudemire, Ballenger & Sprouse, P.A. I was with this firm until December 31, 1994. During this time, I had a general practice which included domestic; civil litigation; criminal (very limited); workers' compensation and social security. I would estimate that approximately 60% of my practice during this time was within the jurisdiction of the family court;
- (d) After leaving the above firm, I began a solo practice in Walhalla, SC. Very shortly thereafter, I became a principal/partner in the firm of Ballenger, Fedder, Cain & Norton, L.L.P. I was with this firm until June of 1998. My practice during this time included domestic; personal injury; workers' compensation; probate; social security; civil and a very limited amount of real estate;
- (e) From June of 1998 to 2001 (to the best of my recollection), I had a solo practice in Walhalla, SC. During this time, I maintained a general practice. However, the main focus of my practice was Family Court matters;
- (f) In 2001, I began practicing with the firm of Fedder, Norton, Ballenger and Enderlin, P.A. The area of my practice did not change. The majority of my practice was appearing in the family court and handling domestic issues. Subsequently, Derek Enderlin left the firm and accepted a job as the Oconee County Public Defender, and Julie Mahon became a part of the firm. The firm's name changed to Norton, Ballenger and Mahon, P.A. on April 23, 2004 based on the records of the Secretary of State. Subsequently, Julie Mahon married and moved from Oconee County, SC. Bradley Norton and I continued to practice in Walhalla, SC. Then on or about July 11, 2011, Keith Denny became a named partner in the firm. The name of the firm was changed to Norton, Ballenger, and Denny, P.A.;
- (g) On May 23, 2012, I had the honor of being elected as Family Court Judge for the Tenth Judicial Circuit. I have served in this position since that date.
16. What is your rating, if any, by any legal rating organization, such as, Best Lawyers, Chambers, Legal 500, Martindale-Hubbell, Who's Who Legal, Super Lawyers, etc.? If you are currently a member of the judiciary, list your last available rating, if any.  
 BV Distinguished rating, Martindale-Hubbell
23. Have you ever held judicial office? If so, list the periods of your service, the courts involved, and whether you were elected or appointed. Describe the jurisdiction of each of the courts and note any limitations on the jurisdiction of each court.

Family Court, Tenth Judicial Circuit, Seat 2  
Date of Election: May 23, 2012  
Date of Service: July 16, 2012 to the present.  
Jurisdiction: Family Court

24. If the answer to question 23 is yes, describe or list five of your most significant orders or opinions and give the citations if they were reported. Also list citations to any appellate review of these orders or opinions.
- (a) SC vs. Michelle G and Robert Dale L., Anderson County. Issues: Termination of Parental Rights. This case is significant for me because it was the first case that I heard that was decided on appeal, and I was affirmed. SC Department of Social Service v. Michelle G and Robert L., 407 S.C. 499, 757 S.E.2d 388 (S.C., 2014);
  - (b) David Tyler vs. Gina Argo, Charleston County. Issues: Child Custody. This case is significant to me because it was my first long (5 day) trial after becoming a family court judge. It is also significant to me because the trial lasted for 5 days and the parties settled it on the morning that I was going to issue my decision;
  - (c) Stephanie L. Couch vs. James A. Couch, Oconee County. Issues: Equitable Division of Marital Property. This case is significant to me because it was a multi-day trial with a self-represented litigant;
  - (d) Moss, Juvenile case, Oconee County. Issues: Criminal Sexual Conduct, Second Degree. This case is significant to me because it was a multi-day case in a juvenile case;
  - (e) SC Department of Social Services, Malcolm, Bell, Miller and Grishman. Anderson County. Issue: Termination of Parental Rights case.
25. Have you ever held public office other than judicial office? Also, state whether or not you have timely filed your report with the State Ethics Commission during the period you held public office.  
No
26. List all employment you had while serving as a judge (whether full-time or part-time, contractual or at will, consulting or otherwise) other than elected judicial office. Specify your dates of employment, employer, major job responsibilities, and supervisor.  
None
27. Have you ever been an unsuccessful candidate for elective, judicial, or other public office?  
In 1999, I submitted an application for the Judge of the Family Court for the Tenth Judicial Circuit, Seat 2. I was found to be qualified for the position. I withdrew my application by letter dated January 21, 2000. The Honorable Timothy M. Cain was elected to the judicial office where he served admirably until he was elected to the federal bench.
28. Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law, teaching of law, or holding judicial or other public office?  
When I was a teenager and during my college years, I worked for my father in his business, Mullins Department Store. I would estimate that I started working for my father when I was 16 years of age and worked for him until November 1978.  
Soon after graduating from college, I became employed by Davis National Bank in Mullins, SC. I worked at Davis National Bank from November 1978 until July 1984. The positions that I held at the Bank were teller, Data Processing Manager, Internal Auditor, Training Coordinator and Marketing Specialist.

29. Are you now an officer or director or involved in the management of any business enterprise? Explain the nature of the business, your duties, and the term of your service.  
No
30. A complete, current financial net worth statement was provided to the Commission.
31. Describe any financial arrangements or business relationships you have, or have had in the past, that could constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position you seek. Explain how you would resolve any potential conflict of interest.  
I own a ½ interest in an office building with an attorney. This is the office building where I practiced law prior to being elected Family Court judge. At the time of my election, it was my intent to transfer my interest in the building to another law partner (who did not have an interest in the office building). I have not been able to transfer my interest in the building to the attorney because the other joint tenant has a federal tax lien filed against him which has now attached to the building. This is a matter that I have tried to resolve since I was elected Family Court judge. Because of this situation, I have asked my docketing clerk not to schedule any hearings before me with the attorney (who is the joint tenant in the office building with me). However, there have been agreements that I have taken in cases in which he is involved but only if there is another attorney on the other side and all of the parties waive the conflict. This issue has caused me a lot of personal stress. After exhausting all of my efforts to resolve this matter, I have come to the decision that the only way that I can resolve this matter is to file a foreclosure action. I have consulted/retained an attorney to handle this matter for me.
32. Have you ever been arrested, charged, or held by federal, state, or other law enforcement authorities for violation or for suspicion of violation of any federal law or regulation, state law or regulation, or county or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, or any other law, including another country's law?  
No
33. Have you, to your knowledge, ever been under federal, state, or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute?  
No
34. Has a tax lien or other collection procedure ever been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? Have you ever defaulted on a student loan? Have you ever filed for bankruptcy?  
A tax lien in the amount of \$604.71 was filed against me on October 17, 2011. After correspondence with the SC Tax Commission, the tax lien was cancelled of record, and I was refunded \$645.19 due to over payment. I then wrote the SC Tax Commission. After receiving my letter, the SC Tax Commission expunged the lien with the Oconee County Register of Deeds. Therefore, that lien is no longer "of record".
35. Have you ever been sued, either personally or professionally, that is, have you ever been named as defendant or respondent in any court of law?  
It was my recollection, that I was named as a party in an action involving real estate which I owned in Marion County, SC. It was my understanding that the Defendants in the case were my mother, my brother and me. However, I have searched the SC judicial website and my father is the only person listed as a defendant in the case.  
Case No. 1993-CP-37-00125: This is an action which I filed against my daughter and her father in order to be named as custodian over an investment account with Smith Barney. At the time of my father's death, he had an investment account with Smith Barney. On the

account, he was listed as the custodian under the Uniform Gift to Minor's Act for my daughter, Courtney Lenore Ballenger. I filed this action seeking to be named successor custodian on these accounts. The Court granted the relief and I was named as successor custodian for Courtney Lenore Ballenger on said accounts.

Case No. 2003-CP-37-649: This action was filed against me on June 23, 2003 alleging that I had missed the statute of limitations in a personal injury case. I turned the matter over to my malpractice carrier. I denied any liability in the case. The case was dismissed by Order of the Court on August 25, 2003.

Case No. 2010-CP-37-1061: This is a foreclosure action. I was named as a Defendant in this suit due to unpaid guardian ad litem fees by one of the Defendants. In Case No. 2003-DR-37-71, I was awarded \$400.00 as guardian fees. Based on the court records, the case was dismissed per Rule 41(a) of the Rules of Civil Procedure.

Case No. 2011-CP-37-499 and Case No. 2012-CP-37-136 (same parties as Case No. 2010-DR-37-1061) Both of these action involve the same parties and deal with the same issue. The actions are foreclosure actions. I was named as a Defendant in these actions due to unpaid guardian ad litem fees. I filed an Answer in the 2011 case. Subsequently, I executed a Disclaimer of Interest in which I disclaimed any interest in the subject property of the foreclosure action due to the award relating to my guardian fees. The 2011 action was dismissed by Order dated May 21, 2012. On February 9, 2012, another foreclosure action was filed. Upon being served in the 2012 foreclosure action, I made contact with the Plaintiff's attorney and advised them that I had executed a disclaimer of my interest. I was dismissed as a party in the 2012 foreclosure action by Order of the Court dated March 9, 2012.

37. Have you ever been investigated by the Department of Social Services? Has your name ever been enrolled on the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect?  
No
38. If you are in private practice, are you covered by malpractice insurance and, if so, how long have you carried malpractice insurance? If applicable, have you ever been covered by a tail policy? If so, please explain when you were covered by a tail policy. Also, if applicable, indicate your coverage and deductible for your current malpractice policy.  
N/A
39. Are you active on or a member of a social media or Internet site or have you, to your knowledge, been featured or depicted on a social media or Internet site, such as, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.? If so, how would your use of social media or other similar types of Internet sites be affected if you were serving in a judicial capacity?  
I am not active on or a member of any social media or Internet sites. Also I have not been featured or depicted on a social media or Internet site.
40. Are you now or have you ever been employed as a "lobbyist," as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(13), or have you acted in the capacity of a "lobbyist's principal," as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(14)?  
No
41. Since filing with the Commission your letter of intent to run for judicial office, have you accepted lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, money, or any other thing of value as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(1) from a lobbyist or lobbyist's principal?  
No

42. S.C. Code § 8-13-700 provides, in part, that “[n]o public official, public member, or public employee may knowingly use his official office, membership, or employment to obtain an economic interest for himself, a member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated.” Please detail any knowledge you have of any formal charges or informal allegations against you or any other candidate for violations of these provisions. Include the disposition, if any, of such charges or allegations.  
None
43. S.C. Code § 8-13-765 provides, in part, that “[n]o person may use government personnel, equipment, materials, or an office building in an election campaign.” Please detail any knowledge you have of any formal charges or informal allegations against you or any other candidate for violations of these provisions. Include the disposition, if any, of such charges or allegations.  
None
44. Itemize (by amount, type, and date) all expenditures, other than those for travel and room and board, made by you, or on your behalf in furtherance of your candidacy for the position you seek.  
None
45. List the amount and recipient of all contributions made by you or on your behalf to members of the General Assembly since the announcement of your intent to seek election to a judgeship.  
None
46. Have you directly or indirectly requested the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened? Have you received the assurance of any public official or public employee that they will seek the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened?  
No
47. Have you requested a friend or colleague to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf? If so, give details. Are you aware of any friends or colleagues contacting members of the General Assembly on your behalf?  
No
48. Have you or has anyone acting on your behalf solicited or collected funds to aid in the promotion of your candidacy? If so, please specify the amount, solicitor, donor, and date of the solicitation.  
No
49. Have you or has anyone acting on your behalf contacted members of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission about your candidacy or intention to become a candidate?  
No
50. List all bar associations and professional organizations of which you are a member and give the titles and dates of any offices you have held in such groups.
- (a) Oconee County Bar Association, President in 1996;
  - (b) SC Bar;  
I am a member of the Family Law Section;
  - (c) SC Conference of Family Court Judges;
  - (d) In the past, I have been a member of the SC Trial Lawyer’s Association.

51. List all civic, charitable, educational, social, and fraternal organizations of which you are or have been a member during the past five years and include any offices held in such a group, any professional honors, awards, or other forms of recognition received and not listed elsewhere.
- (a) Walhalla Rotary Club;
  - (b) Paul Hayne Circle (literary club);
  - (c) The Oconee County Assembly.

In the past:

- (a) Oconee County Drug Court (*Pro Bono*);
  - (b) James M. Brown Parent Teacher Organization (Community Leader).
52. Provide any other information that may reflect positively or negatively on your candidacy, or which you believe should be disclosed in connection with consideration of you for nomination for the position you seek.

I was fortunate to grow up in an environment in which I learned important values by following the examples set by my parents. These values have served me well as a Family Court judge.

Becoming a Family Court judge has allowed me to continue to grow and serve my community in a field about which I am very passionate. Prior to my election as a judge, I had over 20 years of experience in family court issues. In looking back at my legal career, I firmly believe that there have been many opportunities and experiences that have unknowingly brought me to where I am today.

The last three years of my life have without a doubt been the most rewarding years of my life. As a Family Court judge, I firmly believe that we are the face of the judiciary. Most citizens at one point in their life find themselves in front of a family court judge. For the litigants in my courtroom, it is probably one of the most painful and scary times of their lives. I constantly remind myself of that fact, and I always try to take that into consideration when I am on the bench.

A successful family court judge that can best serve their community is one who is passionate for family law; understands the intricacies of domestic law and can handle the unique challenges that exist in Family Court. These are the goals that I set for myself every day since having the honor of serving my state as a Family Court judge.

53. References:

- (a) The Honorable Timothy M. Cain  
U.S. District Judge  
315 South McDuffie Street, First Floor  
Anderson, SC 29624  
(864) 261-2030
- (a) The Honorable Alexander Stephens MacCauley  
1420 West Main Street  
Post Office Box 343  
West Union, SC 29696  
(864) 638-6945
- (c) Evie Hughes  
School District of Oconee County  
414 South Pine Street  
Walhalla, SC 29691



(864) 886-4400  
(d) Beverly Jenkins  
Oconee County Clerk of Court  
205 West Main Street  
Walhalla, SC 29691  
(864) 638-4283

(e) Roy W. Phillips  
Community First Bank  
3685 Blue Ridge Boulevard  
Walhalla, SC 29691  
(864) 638-2105

54. Describe any interest you or a member of your immediate family has in real property:
- (a) in which there is a potential conflict of interest with your involvement in a South Carolina state or local public agency;
  - (b) in which there have been public improvements of \$200 or that adjoins property in which there have been public improvements of \$200; or
  - (c) which was sold, leased, or rented to a state or local public agency in South Carolina.
- List the interest you hold and the value and location of the property. Identify as applicable the:
- (a) nature of any potential conflict of interest;
  - (b) nature and value of any public improvements; and
  - (c) South Carolina state or local public agency which purchased or is leasing or renting such property.

My daughter, Courtney L. Ballenger, owns an office building located at 80 Short Street, Walhalla, SC. She rents the office building to the Oconee County guardian ad litem Program. It is a month to month rental. A copy of the last written lease agreement is attached.

55. Identify any personal property interest you or a member of your immediate family sold, leased, or rented to a South Carolina state or local public agency. Identify the property, its amount or value, and the name of the agency.
- None

YOUR SIGNATURE WILL BE HELD TO CONSTITUTE A WAIVER OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF ANY PROCEEDING BEFORE A GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE OR ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUR CREDIT.

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

Signature: s/Karen F. Ballenger  
Date: July 30, 2015