

Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office

9/16/22

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INTRODUCTION

Tennessee Code Annotated section 17-4-301 et seq. charges the Trial Court Vacancy Commission with assisting the Governor and the People of Tennessee in finding and appointing the best qualified candidates for judicial offices in this State. Please consider the Commission's responsibility in answering the questions in this application questionnaire. For example, when a question asks you to "describe" certain things, please provide a description that contains relevant information about the subject of the question and, especially, that contains detailed information that demonstrates that you are qualified for the judicial office you seek. In order to properly evaluate your application, the Commission needs information about the range of your experience, the depth and breadth of your legal knowledge, and your personal traits such as integrity, fairness, and work habits.

This document is available in Microsoft Word format from the Administrative Office of the Courts (telephone 800-448-7970 or 615-741-2687; website www.tncourts.gov). The Commission requests that applicants obtain the Microsoft Word form and respond directly on the form. Respond in the box provided below each question. (The box will expand as you type in the document.) Review the separate instruction sheet prior to completing this document. Your complete application, including both the original and digital copies, must be received by the Administrative Office of the Courts on or before the deadline prescribed in the Notice of Vacancy. See section 1(g) of the application instructions for additional information related to hand-delivery of application packages.

THIS APPLICATION IS OPEN TO PUBLIC INSPECTION AFTER YOU SUBMIT IT.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE

1. State your present employment.

I am employed as the Special Master of the Fourth Circuit Court for the 20th Judicial District of the State of Tennessee. I was appointed to this position by the late Honorable Philip E. Smith on January 1, 2014.

2. State the year you were licensed to practice law in Tennessee and give your Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility number.

I was licensed to practice law in Tennessee on May 10, 2004. My Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility number is 023380.

3. List all states in which you have been licensed to practice law and include your bar number or identifying number for each state of admission. Indicate the date of licensure and whether the license is currently active. If not active, explain.

Tennessee is the only state in which I have been licensed to practice law.

4. Have you ever been denied admission to, suspended or placed on inactive status by the Bar of any State? If so, explain. (This applies even if the denial was temporary).

Yes. On February 12, 2010, I entered a conditional guilty plea to a Petition for Discipline brought by the Tennessee Board of Responsibility (TBPR) on January 4, 2010. As a condition of the plea, I was suspended from the practice of law in Tennessee for one year. The imposition of the suspension was stayed; I was placed on probation and permitted to continue practicing law under the supervision of a practice monitor. The TBPR determined I successfully completed the probation, and the suspension ceased on or about February 11, 2011.

The complaint arose from a civil case that originated in General Session Court. I represented the defendant. I was successful at the general sessions level of the case and the plaintiff appealed to Circuit Court. In the Circuit Court, I missed discovery deadlines and failed to properly keep my client informed. Eventually, the plaintiff obtained a default after my client's pleadings were struck for failure to adhere to discovery orders and deadlines. The plaintiff subsequently obtained a judgment against my client. No formal malpractice suit ensued; however, my malpractice carrier did compensate my client for the losses.

5. List your professional or business employment/experience since the completion of your legal education. Also include here a description of any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law in which you have ever been engaged (excluding military service, which is covered by a separate question).

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Special Master, Fourth Circuit Court, Davidson County, TN

2014-Present

I am the appointed Special Master to the Fourth Circuit Court pursuant to TCA § 17-2-123. In this role, I am a Judicial Officer and have the following responsibilities:

- Conduct Judicial Settlement Conferences and informal settlement meetings with lawyers and litigants prior to their hearing or trial before the Judge. I have an approximately 85% settlement rate over 2000 of these conferences and meetings.
- Conduct Special Master hearings pursuant to Rule 53 of the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure. This involves hearing specific matters designated by the judge, drafting written reports of findings of facts, conclusions of laws, and recommendations for the judge.
- Preside over order of protection cases that either originate in Circuit Court or are appealed from General Sessions Court.
- Review all adoption files, correspond with attorneys regarding deficiencies, review home studies, prepare files and consult with the judge for the monthly adoption docket. *Fourth Circuit is the only court in Davidson County that hears adoption cases.*
- Review and approve or deny indigency requests to postpone the payment of filing fees.
- Developed and manage an efficient, streamlined process for self-represented litigants in divorce cases. This process has more than doubled the number of self-represented divorces successfully concluded in Fourth Circuit Court.
- Research, brief and consult with the judge on legal issues, memorandums and opinions.

My role as Special Master also includes administrative and office management duties:

- Manage dockets and trial calendars.
- Supervise office staff and oversee office administration (*Fourth Circuit has 7 other staff members*)
- Develop job descriptions, roles and responsibilities for office staff.
- Develop, evaluate and manage office procedures, practices and regulations.
- Interview candidates to fill judicial staff positions.
- Implement and supervise staff cross-training.
- Co-developed an operational plan during COVID restrictions that included the use of technology for virtual hearings, staggered dockets, and managed crowds at the courthouse.
- Created, implemented and continue to manage the temporary day-to-day operations and transition plans for Fourth Circuit Court until the successor judge is appointed.
- Provide support, assistance and direction to special judges currently hearing cases in Fourth Circuit Court, including facilitating and leading docket and case briefing meetings.

- Maintain and manage communications with the Davidson County domestic bar regarding matters in 4th Circuit Court.

LEGAL EXPERIENCE (con't.)

Attorney, SJW Family Law, Nashville, TN **2009- 2013**

I was a solo practitioner focusing on family law matters. My primary practice areas included divorce, property division, alimony, legal separation, annulments, child custody and parenting time, child support, contempt, orders of protection, and mediation.

Founder and Attorney, Family Justice Center, Nashville, TN **2005-2009**

Recognizing the importance of and need for affordable, effective representation in the area of family law, I founded the Family Justice Center in 2005. I independently developed the concept and was solely responsible for its operations. In 2006, the Family Justice Center began accepting clients. With grant funds from the State of Tennessee, I represented more than 250 litigants in family law cases at reduced rates in the Middle Tennessee area. The Family Justice Center was the first organization of its kind in Middle Tennessee, providing reduced-fee legal services to family law litigants. The Family Justice Center served as a “pioneer” in the community, shedding light on the need for affordable access to the legal system in the area of family law.

Associate, Manson, Jones and Associates, Nashville, TN **2004-2008**

Associate Attorney in a general practice law firm. I worked as a law clerk before and while attending law school. Upon passing the bar, the firm hired me as an associate attorney. I practiced in the areas of entertainment, family, juvenile, probate, real estate, and contract law, in addition to general civil and family law litigation. I supervised office staff positions, assisted with business planning and organization, and delegated and supervised workloads.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Professor, Nashville School of Law-Nashville, TN **2021-Present**

Professor for the required Family Law course for 3L students. In this class, I cover the following topics: valid marriages, annulments, marital contracts, grounds for divorce, division of marital estate, alimony, child custody, child support, parental relocation, domestic abuse and contempt. This class provides a strong foundation for students who may practice family law and for those affected by family law issues. The class provides bar preparation as well.

Adjunct Professor, Middle Tennessee State University-Murfreesboro, TN **2018-Present**

Professor for the elective Family Law course in the Paralegal Legal Studies program as part of the undergraduate curriculum in the Department of Political Science and International Relations. I cover the following subjects in this class: family law courts overview, grounds for divorce, discovery, division of marital estate, alimony, child custody, child support, parental relocation, domestic abuse, contempt, alternative dispute resolution and document drafting (*pleadings, marital dissolution agreements, parenting plans, child support worksheets and interrogatories*). This class provides a general overview of the listed subject matters to prepare students to be legal assistants.

Adjunct Professor, Strayer University • Nashville, Tennessee

2004-2007

Professor for undergraduate and graduate classes in Business Law, Conflict Resolution and Leadership, Constitutional and Administrative Law, Political Science and Public Administration.

Part Time Instructor, Tennessee Career College • Nashville, Tennessee

2004-2005

Instructor in the Paralegal Studies courses. This course focused on a general overview of the practice of law and legal theories to prepare students to be paralegals.

6. Describe the nature of your present law practice, listing the major areas of law in which you practice and the percentage each constitutes of your total practice.

As Special Master of the Fourth Circuit Court, I work exclusively in domestic relations, including cases involving divorces, annulments, separate support and maintenance, custody, care and support of children, adoptions, UIFSA matters, appeals from juvenile court, and order of protection cases.

The Fourth Circuit Court has approximately 2600 cases pending, as of September 22, 2022, broken down as follows:

1427 Divorces

165 Non-Divorce Related Petitions

82 Orders of Protection

22 General Sessions Appeals for Orders of Protection

700 UIFSA Cases

8 Juvenile Court Appeals

184 Adoptions

As Special Master, in tandem with the sitting Judge, I am responsible for reviewing legal pleadings to ensure compliance with the governing legal authority. Thus, I must stay informed on the relevant statutes, rules, and procedures in these practice areas. My role also requires that I demonstrate strong legal reasoning skills, and adjudicate matters fairly and impartially under the law and in the best interest of children. I am responsible for conducting settlement conferences in matters set for contested hearings. In these conferences, I meet with lawyers and litigants to discuss and provide a legal analysis of the issues, as well as encourage creative problem solving. It is important that I establish and maintain good rapport with attorneys and litigants to be effective in this role.

7. Describe generally your experience (over your entire time as a licensed attorney) in trial courts, appellate courts, administrative bodies, legislative or regulatory bodies, other forums, and/or transactional matters.

In the beginning of my legal career, I practiced in General Sessions Civil, Juvenile (*delinquent, dependent and neglect and parentage cases*), and Probate courts, and a small number of civil cases in Circuit Court, including one jury trial. I also represented a client in a case before the Social Security Administration to obtain social security benefits for a child whose father passed prior to establishing parentage.

Beginning in 2006 and continuing through 2013 the vast majority of my caseload was in Juvenile and Circuit Court for matters involving divorce, custody, child support, orders of protection, parentage, and mediation. I cannot say with certainty how many cases I handled; however, I maintained a high-volume practice and estimate that I represented litigants in well over 400 matters, more than half of which involved some level of contested or protracted litigation.

8. Describe any matters of special note involving your practice in trial courts, appellate courts, and administrative bodies.

I have engaged in a significant amount of work with self-represented litigants. Before the Tennessee Supreme Court developed standardized forms for self-represented litigants to use in uncontested divorce cases, many self-represented litigants were unable to finalize their divorce actions due to deficient pleadings and paperwork. In my early work with the Family Justice Center, I provided unbundled legal services to help litigants draft and amend pleadings, Marital Dissolution Agreements, and Parenting Plans to conform with the court's requirements. Without my assistance, many self-represented litigants would have spent far more time, money, and energy to resolve their cases.

As Special Master, I have continued to assist self-represented litigants and have implemented a procedure to enable the court to handle those cases more efficiently. Fourth Circuit Court finalizes approximately 20-30 divorces each month in which self-represented litigants use the forms promulgated by the Tennessee Supreme Court. In approximately 60% of these cases, the parties' pleadings and other paperwork is deficient or incomplete. I developed and implemented a system for Fourth Circuit Court to assist these litigants in addressing those deficiencies. This process allows litigants to conclude their divorce actions in a timely, cost-effective manner, as envisioned by the Supreme Court. Spearheading this process with the court's assistance has enabled many self-represented litigants to finalize their divorce actions without undue delay and expense.

9. Describe any other legal experience, not stated above, that you would like to bring to the attention of the Commission.

Moderator and Content Creator of *Family Matters with Judge Phil Smith* 2020-2022

I moderated and co-created content for educational videos featuring Judge Philip E. Smith to inform attorneys and the public at large regarding basic family law matters. Over the course of approximately 18 months, we broadcast 9 live webcasts via Zoom, which were later saved to Judge Smith's YouTube page where they are still available for viewing. Topics include: Overview of Family Law Courts, Domestic Violence, Alimony, Child Support, Decision Making Authority, Divorce Grounds, New Developments in Family Law, Division of Property, and Family Law Litigation.

Presenter for Various CLE Programs 2014-present

I have presented at various seminars and classes for continuing legal education credit in Nashville and surrounding counties. Specifically, I have presented in the area of family law, mediation and alternative dispute resolution, judicial settlement conferences, and practices and procedures in Fourth Circuit Court.

Lead Writer and Contributor for *Black Law* 2004-2005

I was the lead writer, content creator and contributor to *Black Law*. *Black Law* was a printed insert in the Tennessee Tribune Magazine that covered legal content of special interest to the African American community and the legal community as a whole.

Rule 31 Mediation Training and Certification in Family Law 2010-2013

I completed the Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 31 Family Mediator training and was later listed as a Rule 31 family law mediator. I conducted several mediations until I began serving as Special Master of the Fourth Circuit Court.

Co-Author, *Cosmetology and the Law*. 2001

I co-authored the book *Cosmetology and the Law*, which served as a resource for cosmetologists on legal issues in the field. *Copyright 2001. R. Manson Press.*

10. List and describe all prior occasions on which you have submitted an application for any state or federal judicial position.

None.

EDUCATION

11. List each college, law school, and other graduate school which you have attended, including dates of attendance, degree awarded, major, any form of recognition or other aspects of your education you believe are relevant, and your reason for leaving each school if no degree was awarded.

Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN **Spring 2010-Fall 2013**

I enrolled in the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy program in January 2010. I pursued this degree to gain insight and knowledge about what litigants experience in family law cases from a psychological standpoint and how to better serve them. I completed the core academic curriculum for the program but due to time constraints, did not complete the required practicum or obtain the degree.

University of Tennessee School of Law, Knoxville, TN **Fall 2000-Fall 2002**

I began law school at UT Knoxville immediately after completing my undergraduate degree. I commuted between Nashville and Knoxville and took summer classes to graduate early. I received my Juris Doctorate from UT in December of 2002.

Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN **Fall 1999-Summer 2000**

I attended classes at night while working during the day and received a Bachelor of Arts in Management and Human Relations in the Summer of 2000.

Martin Methodist College, Nashville, TN **Fall 1998-Spring 1999**

I attended Martin Methodist College at a satellite location in Nashville, taking pre-requisite course work to enroll in the Management and Human Relations program at Trevecca. I did not receive a degree from Martin Methodist College.

Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN **Fall 1994-Spring 1995**

I took a few classes at Tennessee State University; however, never declared a major and did not complete a degree program. I was having challenges balancing work, school and parenting responsibilities so I stopped attending.

Fisk University, Nashville, TN **Fall 1992-Spring 1994**

I enrolled at Fisk University the fall after high school graduation, majoring in Mathematics. I did not obtain a degree from Fisk. I stopped attending after the spring semester of my sophomore year due to the birth of my first child.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

██████████ 1974

13. How long have you lived continuously in the State of Tennessee?

I have lived continuously in Tennessee for 34 years

14. How long have you lived continuously in the county where you are now living?

I have lived continuously in Davidson County for 16 years.

15. State the county in which you are registered to vote.

I am registered to vote in Davidson County.

16. Describe your military service, if applicable, including branch of service, dates of active duty, rank at separation, and decorations, honors, or achievements. Please also state whether you received an honorable discharge and, if not, describe why not.

None.

17. Have you ever pled guilty or been convicted or are now on diversion for violation of any law, regulation or ordinance other than minor traffic offenses? If so, state the approximate date, charge and disposition of the case.

Yes. I pled guilty to No Driver's License pursuant to TCA §55-50-301 in Davidson County, Tennessee under case number SC249575 on January 12, 1998. The case was disposed of by the payment of a \$25 fine and court costs.

18. To your knowledge, are you now under federal, state or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute or disciplinary rule? If so, give details.

No.

19. Please identify the number of formal complaints you have responded to that were filed against you with any supervisory authority, including but not limited to a court, a board of professional responsibility, or a board of judicial conduct, alleging any breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct by you. Please provide any relevant details on any such complaint if the complaint was not dismissed by the court or board receiving the complaint. You may wish to request a report from the appropriate supervisory authority (or authorities) for a

complete history.

Over the course of my twenty-year legal career, I have received a total of five (5) formal complaints filed with the Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility (TBPR), all of which were filed more than 10 years ago. They are as follows:

1. On June 12, 2007, a client filed a complaint against me (30216-5-CH). The case was “dismissed by investigations” on June 16, 2008.
2. On May 29, 2008 a client filed a complaint against me. (31138-5-DB). The complaint was incorporated into the formal Petition for Discipline referenced in paragraph four below and subsequently non-suited by the Board.
3. On May 29, 2008 a client filed a complaint against me (31425-5-DB). The complaint was incorporated into the formal Petition for Discipline referenced in paragraph four below and subsequently non-suited by the Board.
4. A formal complaint for discipline from the TBPR was filed against me on January 4, 2010 (2009-1833-5-SG). The filing consolidated three complaints filed in 2008, two of which were non-suited (*as stated in paragraph 2 and 3 above*). I entered a conditional guilty plea for the action that remained and was suspended from the practice of law in Tennessee for one year. However, imposition of the suspension was stayed and I was placed on probation, which allowed me to continue practicing law under the supervision of a practice monitor. The TBPR determined I successfully completed the probation, and the suspension ceased on or about February 11, 2011.
5. On October 23, 2013, a client filed a complaint against me (36636-5-ES). The case was “dismissed by investigations” on December 30, 2013.

20. Has a tax lien or other collection procedure been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities or creditors within the last five (5) years? If so, give details.

No.

21. Have you ever filed bankruptcy (including personally or as part of any partnership, LLC, corporation, or other business organization)?

Yes. I filed a Chapter 7 bankruptcy on September 24, 2004. The bankruptcy was successfully discharged on January 28, 2005.

22. Have you ever been a party in any legal proceedings (including divorces, domestic proceedings, and other types of proceedings)? If so, give details including the date, court and docket number and disposition. Provide a brief description of the case. This question does not seek, and you may exclude from your response, any matter where you were

involved only as a nominal party, such as if you were the trustee under a deed of trust in a foreclosure proceeding.

A list of the legal proceedings in which I have been a party is attached to this application. I have been the subject of several legal proceedings, mainly collection actions, dating back to 1996. I worked hard for many years to balance work, school, and single parenting responsibilities and experienced many financial difficulties.

I dropped out of college after the birth of my first child in 1994 at the age of 20. I had my second child in 1996. I spent several years working various low paying jobs, often two or three at a time. As the sole provider for my children, I was keenly aware I needed to improve my earning potential to provide a better life for us. In 1998 I resumed my undergraduate education with the goal of attending law school. I attended school at night while working during the day and on weekends. I completed my undergraduate degree in the summer of 2000 and began law school that fall at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. UTK provided me with a generous scholarship but, because of my children, I could not relocate to Knoxville. I commuted between Nashville and Knoxville until I graduated in December 2002.

After being admitted to the practice of law in 2004, I worked full-time as an attorney and did have more meaningful and stable income. But during prior years I accumulated insurmountable debts and I filed for bankruptcy in the fall of 2004.

Beginning in 2006, I dedicated a large part of my practice to providing legal services at reduced rates, a practice I termed "affordable advocacy." I continued this practice throughout my career. While this filled an important need in the area of family law and helped me grow and learn professionally, it also meant that finances often were inconsistent and limited.

While it is difficult and humbling to reveal my past financial difficulties, I am proud of my resiliency and determination. I am very fortunate in that I have been able to overcome these challenges and did reach my goal of providing a better life for my children and me. I also recognize my experience is one shared by many Americans and many family law litigants. My past experiences afford me great insight into their challenges and allow me to approach issues inherent in family law cases with compassion, creativity and respect.

As a side note my son has obtained various certifications in areas that have allowed him to be successful in industrial fields. My daughter received an undergraduate degree from Howard University in Washington, DC in 2018 and a JD from Washington University in St. Louis in 2021. She successfully passed the Tennessee Bar last year. Both of my children are self-sufficient and debt free.

23. List all organizations other than professional associations to which you have belonged within the last five (5) years, including civic, charitable, religious, educational, social and fraternal organizations. Give the titles and dates of any offices which you have held in such organizations.

DREAM STREETS NASHVILLE**2021-present**

Dream Streets' mission is to protect and empower individuals living in distress. Many members of the group have recently overcome drug addictions, face food and housing insecurity, struggle to find safe, affordable childcare, and face other challenges unique to socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. The organization provides supplemental groceries and family-strengthening tools to members of the community. Dream Streets also has a Mom's Ministry that operates as a support group for mothers. I serve as a volunteer, participant and member of the Mom's Group, which meets weekly on Sunday afternoons. I also serve on the housing grant committee, which provides housing subsidies to individuals seeking to achieve financial stability or purchase a home.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE LAW ALUMNI COUNCIL**2021-present**

The mission of the UT Law Alumni Council is to promote alumni involvement within the College of Law and to build and maintain a viable annual giving program. Alumni Council members serve as advocates of the law school. Activities include fundraising, attending alumni events, reporting concerns to leadership for discussion and serving as a student mentor. I have been a member of the Council since 2021.

A STEP AHEAD FOUNDATION OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE**2019-present**

ASAF aids in the prevention of unplanned pregnancies by providing free, long-acting reversible contraception to women in Middle Tennessee. In 2019, I was invited to make the "ask" at the inaugural Brunch and Bubbly Fundraiser for the organization. The event garnered significant contributions, exceeding the group's goal. I became a board member in January 2022.

BOOKED NOT BOUND**2018-present**

I co-founded Booked Not Bound (BNB) – A Juvenile Justice Literacy Initiative with two friends and colleagues in 2018. BNB is a book club for youth housed at the Davidson County Juvenile Detention Center. Each month we select a book, purchase and distribute copies to youth in the Davidson County Detention Center for them to read on their own. Then, we meet with the youth to discuss the book and serve as mentors.

LES GEMMES, INC. – NASHVILLE CHAPTER**2018-present**

Les Gemmes, Inc.'s purpose is to promote and provide charitable, educational, civic, and cultural activities aimed at enhancing the populations in the communities where local chapters are active. The Nashville Chapter has made its impact locally by mentoring girls and young women beginning in the 6th grade and continuing through their graduation from high school. The annual Literary Luncheon is the organization's main event to raise funds that support programming for our mentees and provide scholarships to mentees who are graduating seniors who plan to further their education. I am a member of Les Gemmes, Inc. – Nashville Chapter. I have served as Co-Chair of the Literary Luncheon from 2020-2022 and as Vice-President of the chapter since 2021.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL COLLABORATIVE OF TENNESSEE**2016-present**

The mission of the non-partisan Women's Political Collaborative of Tennessee is to achieve parity for women by influencing policy through education and mobilization of statewide

networks. The organization serves the community by providing informative and relevant programming on matters that impact women and families, and through legislative lobbying. I joined as a member in 2016, served as President Elect from 2019-2020 and President from 2021-2022.

MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

2009-present

I joined Mt. Zion Baptist Church as a member in 2009.

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC.

1993-present

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA), an international service organization, was founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C. It is the oldest Greek organization established by African American college-educated women. AKA is comprised of more than 325,000 initiated members in graduate and undergraduate chapters located in 12 countries. I joined as a member of the PI Chapter when I was a student at Fisk University in 1993.

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF NASHVILLE

2017-2018

The Junior League of Nashville is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. I was a Junior League member in 2017-2018.

YOUNG LEADERS COUNCIL

2017

Young Leaders Council (YLC) was formed to broaden and strengthen Nashville's volunteer leadership base. YLC's programming consists of a series of eleven interactive training sessions, which address fundamental board skills. Each session is facilitated by an industry expert and includes discussion on topics that are crucial for today's nonprofit leadership roles. I was a member of the Young Leaders Council Class in 2017.

NEW LEVEL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER

2010-2017

New Level CDC advocates for the low-to-moderate income community by working with legislators, other non-profits, and private developers to create more affordable homes in Nashville. I was a board member for New Level from 2010-2017

24. Have you ever belonged to any organization, association, club or society which limits its membership to those of any particular race, religion, or gender? Do not include in your answer those organizations specifically formed for a religious purpose, such as churches or synagogues.
- a. If so, list such organizations and describe the basis of the membership limitation.
 - b. If it is not your intention to resign from such organization(s) and withdraw from any participation in their activities should you be nominated and selected for

the position for which you are applying, state your reasons.

- a. As set forth in my response to question number 23 above, I am a past member of Junior League of Nashville and a current member of Les Gemmes, Inc. – Nashville Chapter and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. The membership of these organizations is limited to women. While the organizations' membership is limited to women, all are committed to public service and enhancing the lives of people in the community a whole with no limitations as to the individuals they serve.
- b. It is my understanding that my membership in these organizations is allowed pursuant to Rule 10, Cannon 3.7 of the Tennessee Supreme Court Rules; therefore, I intend to remain a member.

ACHIEVEMENTS

25. List all bar associations and professional societies of which you have been a member within the last ten years, including dates. Give the titles and dates of any offices which you have held in such groups. List memberships and responsibilities on any committee of professional associations which you consider significant.

2022-Present Tennessee Bar Association, Member

2022-Present Nashville Bar Association, Member

2017-2022 Harry Philips American Inn of Court, Barrister Level Member

2005-Present Napier-Looby Bar Association, Member
Board Member 2014-2020

26. List honors, prizes, awards or other forms of recognition which you have received since your graduation from law school which are directly related to professional accomplishments.

I was nominated by the Women's Political Collaborative of Tennessee to represent the organization as a Traditional Nominee for the ATHENA awards in 2020.

27. List any public office you have held or for which you have been candidate or applicant. Include the date, the position, and whether the position was elective or appointive.

None.

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

28. What are your reasons for seeking this position? *(150 words or less)*

Family law has been my passion for more than fifteen years. And it has been my good fortune to work with and learn from one of Tennessee's most learned family law trial judges for more than half that time. Seeking this position is a natural progression in my career.

Additionally, I want to bring new energy to the family law court, to improve how we administer justice. The area of family law has developed and evolved over the years and the courts have been slow to implement and use technology and other processes to benefit those it serves. I will make the system more user-friendly, efficient, effective, and less costly. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted ways courts can run more efficiently, saving litigants and lawyers time and money. It is time to expand on what we have learned and bring the courts up to date.

29. Describe the judgeship you seek (i.e. geographic area, types of cases, number of judges, etc. and explain how your selection would impact the court. *(150 words or less)*

By Public Act enacted in 1957, the Fourth Circuit Court of the 20th Judicial District hears "any and all types and kinds of actions, litigation and proceedings involving domestic matters," as well as orders of protection, adoptions, and appeals from juvenile court in dependency and neglect and termination of parental rights cases. The judicial district's domestic case load is divided between two judges, with approximately 2,600 cases (69%) pending in Fourth Circuit Court.

Judge Smith's passing was sudden and unexpected. There was no opportunity to plan for this transition. It was my honor to work under Judge Smith's direction and guidance for more than eight years. My appointment to this position would ensure a smooth transition and minimize disruption to court proceedings and provide continuity and stability for lawyers, litigants, and court staff.

30. Will you uphold the law even if you disagree with the substance of the law (e.g., statute or rule) at issue? Give an example from your experience as a licensed attorney that supports your response to this question. *(250 words or less)*

In the last conversation I had with Judge Smith, he expressed to me that judges often must make difficult decisions. He stated that it is important to make the best decision possible under the relevant law, facts and legal standards. Judge Smith emphasized the importance of being comfortable and confident before finalizing and issuing a decision. More importantly, he told me that absent a blatant mistake, the decision must stand. A judge cannot allow outside factors (*such as backlash from litigants, lawyers, the media or public at large*) to sway the judge in a way that changes or disturbs the integrity of the decision.

I had no idea that would be the last conversation I would have with my friend and mentor. Those

words impacted me when he spoke them and continue to impact me today. It was the last—and perhaps the most important—lesson I learned from him.

I understand the law will not always support what I, or others, find to be fair, reasonable or just. As judge, I must follow the law even if I disagree with the outcome. The role of the judiciary is to interpret laws, not to make law or policy. This is a difficult concept for many to understand and accept. But I understand and accept it and I am fully prepared to uphold the law.

REFERENCES

31. List five (5) persons, and their current positions and contact information, who would recommend you for the judicial position for which you are applying. Please list at least two persons who are not lawyers. Please note that the Commission or someone on its behalf may contact these persons regarding your application.

A. Aubrey B. Harwell, Jr., Founding Member at Neal & Harwell PLC, [REDACTED]

B. Richard Manson, Partner at Manson, Johnson, & Conner PLLC, [REDACTED]

C. Marlene Eskind Moses, Partner at Gullett, Sanford, Robinson & Martin PLLC, [REDACTED]

D. Tim Townsend, State Trial Court Administrator-Davidson County, [REDACTED]

E. Bishop Joseph W. Walker, III, Pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, [REDACTED]

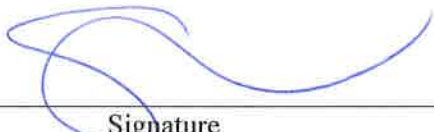
AFFIRMATION CONCERNING APPLICATION

Read, and if you agree to the provisions, sign the following:

I have read the foregoing questions and have answered them in good faith and as completely as my records and recollections permit. I hereby agree to be considered for nomination to the Governor for the office of Judge of the [Court] Fourth Circuit Court, 20th Judicial District of Tennessee, and if appointed by the Governor, agree to serve that office. In the event any changes occur between the time this application is filed and the public hearing, I hereby agree to file an amended questionnaire with the Administrative Office of the Courts for distribution to the Commission members.

I understand that the information provided in this questionnaire shall be open to public inspection upon filing with the Administrative Office of the Courts and that the Commission may publicize the names of persons who apply for nomination and the names of those persons the Commission nominates to the Governor for the judicial vacancy in question.

Dated: 10/3/22, 2022.



Signature

When completed, return this questionnaire to Rachel Harmon at the Administrative Office of the Courts, 511 Union Street, Suite 600, Nashville, TN 37219.



TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
511 UNION STREET, SUITE 600
NASHVILLE CITY CENTER
NASHVILLE, TN 37219

TENNESSEE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
TENNESSEE BOARD OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT
AND OTHER LICENSING BOARDS

WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY

I hereby waive the privilege of confidentiality with respect to any information that concerns me, including public discipline, private discipline, deferred discipline agreements, diversions, dismissed complaints and any complaints erased by law, and is known to, recorded with, on file with the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of Tennessee, the Tennessee Board of Judicial Conduct (previously known as the Court of the Judiciary) and any other licensing board, whether within or outside the State of Tennessee, from which I have been issued a license that is currently active, inactive or other status. I hereby authorize a representative of the Trial Court Vacancy Commission to request and receive any such information and distribute it to the membership of the Commission and to the Office of the Governor.

Stephanie J. Williams
Type or Print Name

[Signature]
Signature

10/3/22
Date

023380
BPR #

Please identify other licensing boards that have issued you a license, including the state issuing the license and the license number.

ATTACHMENT FOR QUESTION #22

Case Name	Docket Number	Court	Date	Disposition	Description
IC Penny Company v. Stephanie J. Williams	96GC10486	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	5/24/1996	Judgment entered for \$632.00. Judgment discharged in bankruptcy	Collection
Discover Card v. Stephanie J. Williams	97GC3850	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	2/20/1997	Judgment entered for \$2,091.88. Judgment discharged in bankruptcy	Collection
Charles Odle v. Stephanie J. Williams	02GT10872	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	12/5/2002	Judgment entered for \$3,706.95. Judgment discharged in bankruptcy	Landlord/Tenant Action
Kelly Callahan v. Stephanie Williams	02GC16986	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	3/14/2003	Judgment entered for \$1,549.23. Judgment fully satisfied on 10/14/2003	Collection
Davidson Academy v. Stephanie Williams	03GC21588	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	11/4/2003	Judgment entered for \$6,730.86. Judgment discharged in bankruptcy	Collection
Stephanie Williams v. Frederick Puckett, Sr.	PT0000017078P T0000021497	Juvenile Court, Davidson County	2/19/2004	Order of parenting time and child support.	Parentage, Parenting Time and Child Support Action
Pediatric Associates v. Stephanie J. Williams	05GC19558	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	11/2/2005	Judgment entered for \$648.07. The judgment was satisfied on 11/8/2006	Collection
Omni Property Management v. Stephanie J. Williams	06GT5989	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	7/6/2006	Case dismissed 8/3/2006	Landlord/Tenant Action
Donelson Christian Academy v. Stephanie Williams	06GC19613	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	10/20/2006	Judgment entered for \$4,447.08. Judgment was satisfied on 7/30/10	Collection
Omni Property Management v. Stephanie J. Williams	06GT10708	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	11/21/2006	Case dismissed 1/19/2007	Landlord/Tenant Action
Dee Ann Walker v. Stephanie Williams	08GC9284	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	4/17/2008	Judgment entered for \$3,298.98. Judgment was satisfied on 9/15/11	Collection

Certified Reporting v. Stephanie J. Williams	08GC17082	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	7/17/2008	Non-Suited 10/9/2008	Collection
Germantown Partners v. Stephanie Williams	09GT488	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	1/13/2009	Non-Suited 2/24/2009	Landlord/Tenant Action
Wesley Stoddard v. Stephanie Williams	09GC12721	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	6/4/2009	Non-Suited 6/17/2009	Landlord/Tenant Action
Iatoya Jawara v. Stephanie Janet Williams	09GC16911	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	7/22/2009	Case dismissed 9/1/2009	Fee dispute
Andrew Hereford v. Stephanie Janet Williams	11C-849	Circuit Court, Davidson County, TN	3/3/2011	Case dismissed 12/13/2011	Legal Malpractice Action
Wesley Stoddard v. Stephanie Williams	11GC7386	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	4/13/2011	Non-Suited 7/11/11	Landlord/Tenant Action
CJUF II Terrazzo v. Stephanie J. Williams	12GT2955	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	4/5/2012	Non-Suited 5/9/12	Landlord/Tenant Action
CJUF II Terrazzo v. Stephanie J. Williams	12GT9439	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	10/15/2012	Non-Suited 11/6/2012	Landlord/Tenant Action
Nashville Terrazzo Partnership	12GT11037	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	12/10/2012	Non-Suited 1/15/13	Landlord/Tenant Action
Wessex Towers v. Stephanie J. Williams	13GC15411	General Sessions Court, Davidson County	9/10/2013	Non-Suited 11/26/13	HOA Suit
Ashley Martin Green v. Brent Green and Stephanie J. Williams	2013-601	Circuit Court, Williamson County	12/10/2013	Case dismissed on 6/2/2014	Malicious Prosecution Action