



3200 Devine Street, Suite 103
Columbia, South Carolina 29205
info@garberreporting.com
Telephone: (803) 256-4500

PUBLIC HEARINGS

December 02, 2024

2024 SC Judicial Merit Selection Commission

REPORTER: Kathryn Bostrom

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JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION
TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

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BEFORE: SENATOR LUKE A. RANKIN, CHAIRMAN
REPRESENTATIVE "MICAH" CASKEY, IV, VICE CHAIRMAN
SENATOR BILLY GARRETT
REPRESENTATIVE WALLACE H. "JAY" JORDAN, JR.
REPRESENTATIVE J. TODD RUTHERFORD
HOPE BLACKLEY
LUCY GREY MCIVER
ANDREW N. SAFRAN
J.P. PETE STROM
ERIN B. CRAWFORD, CHIEF COUNSEL

* * * * *

DATE: Monday, December 2, 2024
TIME: 9:30 a.m.
LOCATION: Gressette Building, Room 105
1101 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

REPORTED BY: Kathryn B. Bostrom, Court Reporter

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Court Reporter's Legend:
dashes [--] Intentional or purposeful]
interruption
[ph] Denotes phonetically written
[sic] Written as said

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Good morning. We will go on
3 the record now and resume our screening process.
4 Before us, we have Judge Reibold. Judge, good
5 morning, sir. If you would, please raise your
6 right hand.

7 ROBERT REIBOLD, having been first duly sworn,
8 was examined and testified as follows:

9 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. if you would,
10 please state your full name for the record.

11 JUDGE REIBOLD: Robert Lawrence Reibold.

12 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Judge, there should be some
13 documents in front of you. If you would, please
14 take a second to review those.

15 JUDGE REIBOLD: I'm familiar with them.

16 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Are there any updates
17 necessary for those?

18 JUDGE REIBOLD: No, sir.

19 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Okay. Do you have any
20 objections to our entering those into the
21 record?

22 JUDGE REIBOLD: I do not.

23 (EXHIBIT NO. 1 MARKED FOR
24 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (16
25 pages) PDQ)

1 (EXHIBIT NO. 2 MARKED FOR
2 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)
3 Sworn Statement)

4 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. Let me give
5 staff just a second to do that. The Judicial
6 Merit Selection Commission has thoroughly
7 investigated your application and qualifications
8 for the bench. Our inquiry is focused on the
9 nine evaluative criteria and has included a
10 thorough study of your application materials, a
11 ballot box survey, verification of your
12 compliance with state ethics laws, a search of
13 newspaper and other media articles in which your
14 name appears, a study of previous screenings,
15 and a check for economic conflicts of interest.
16 We received no affidavits filed in opposition to
17 your election, and there are no witnesses
18 present to testify. Judge, we'd be happy to
19 hear any brief opening statement you may wish to
20 offer. Otherwise, I would recognize staff
21 counsel to begin with questions.

22 JUDGE REIBOLD: I don't think we need an opening
23 statement. Let's go ahead and get into it.

24 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. Ms. Chappell.

25 MS. CHAPPELL: Thank you.

EXAMINATION

1
2 MS. CHAPPELL:

3 Q. Judge Reibold, good morning.

4 A. Good morning.

5 Q. Why do you want to continue serving as an
6 administrative law court judge?

7 A. Well, I still believe in the system. And the system
8 doesn't work unless the people that are in the roles
9 in the system are dedicated to it and committed to it
10 and doing things the right way. And so I view
11 judicial service as my way to contribute to society,
12 to give back. It's a form of public service to me.
13 On a personal level, I find it to be meaningful work.
14 I think it's work that I'm suited for, and I'm still
15 enjoying it.

16 Q. Thank you for that. Judge Reibold, you indicated in
17 your PDQ that since your last screening, a lawsuit
18 was filed against you in 2023 in the federal district
19 court with the caption Guy v. Office of General
20 Counsel et al. You indicated Mr. Guy is an inmate
21 that appeared before you. Please explain the nature
22 or disposition of that lawsuit.

23 A. I really wish I could tell you. I was never served
24 with that lawsuit. I never appeared in that lawsuit.
25 I stumbled across it doing my application. I did a

1 search on myself to see what was out there because
2 that's one of the things y'all do. And I found this
3 lawsuit. I looked at PACER and found out that it was
4 dismissed before it was ever served. I don't know
5 what the allegations were. I wish I could help you
6 some more on that.

7 **Q. Sure. The commission received 254 ballot box surveys**
8 **regarding you with 16 additional comments. The**
9 **ballot box survey, for example, contained the**
10 **following positive comments: "Excellent judge."**
11 **Another said "Judge Reibold is a very capable and**
12 **diligent jurist who is perfect for the ALC." None of**
13 **the written comments expressed concern.**

14 MS. CHAPPELL: I would note that the Midlands Citizen
15 Committee found Judge Reibold qualified in the
16 evaluative criteria of constitutional
17 qualifications, physical health, and mental
18 stability. The committee found him well
19 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical
20 fitness, professional and academic ability,
21 character, reputation, experience, and judicial
22 temperament. The committee stated in summary:
23 "Well qualified, no comment needed."

24 **Q. I just have a few housekeeping issues and then I'll**
25 **be finished with my portion. Judge Reibold, since**

1 submitting your letter of intent, have you contacted
2 any members of the commission about your candidacy?

3 A. I have not.

4 Q. Are you familiar with South Carolina Code Section
5 2-19-70 including the limitations on contacting
6 members of the General Assembly regarding your
7 screening?

8 A. I'm very familiar with it.

9 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
10 sought or received the pledge of any legislator
11 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
12 your screening?

13 A. I have not.

14 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
15 of the General Assembly on your behalf?

16 A. I have not.

17 Q. Are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in
18 this process on your behalf?

19 A. No, I'm not.

20 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the
21 Commission's guidelines on pledging and South
22 Carolina Code Section 2-19-70E?

23 A. I do.

24 MS. CHAPPELL: I would just note for the record that
25 any concerns raised during the investigation

1 regarding the candidate were incorporated into
2 the questioning today. I have no further
3 questions, Mr. Chairman.

4 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, ma'am. Mr. Safran.

5 MR. SAFRAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It took a
6 while to get here, and I remember.

7 JUDGE REIBOLD: As I said, I'm very familiar with the
8 rules.

9 MR. SAFRAN: And I'll say this. I applaud the
10 determination that got you to where you are, and
11 I really commend you for what I'm seeing
12 because, you know, it was something that
13 obviously you desired a great deal. You cared
14 enough to keep trying. And I think eventually
15 you won enough people over to get that
16 opportunity, and you have made every possible, I
17 guess, concern to be meaningless. And in fact,
18 you've basically done exactly what you wanted us
19 to understand from day one, which was, I can do
20 this job, and I can do it well. And to see
21 these comments is really, I think, not just a
22 validation for us letting this happen, but for
23 you, you know, convincing us because you did.
24 And I think you should be applauded for it.

25 JUDGE REIBOLD: Thank you. Thank you very much.

1 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Representative Rutherford.

2 REPRESENTATIVE RUTHERFORD: I just want to echo that.

3 Like I've been here almost 25 years, and I think
4 so have you just running for this position. But
5 truly, the comments are just exemplary. And
6 kudos to you for doing such a great job at a job
7 that you worked so hard to get.

8 Congratulations.

9 JUDGE REIBOLD: Well, thank you. I appreciate that.

10 REPRESENTATIVE RUTHERFORD: Absolutely.

11 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Any other members of the
12 commission? Judge, I'll just share with you
13 some comments that I had highlighted, and these
14 may be what staff counsel just read to you, but
15 I was distracted in a moment. But I think
16 they're -- if they were the ones read, they bear
17 repeating. "Excellent jurist, knowledgeable,
18 hardworking, fair and respectful to all who
19 appear, smart, detailed, great calming
20 temperament, smart professional, very prepared,
21 willing to hear both parties. Give them a fair
22 shot." I think that's commendable, sir, and I
23 think it's something that I appreciate very much
24 as a member of the bar, a member of the
25 profession, and as someone who thinks very

1 highly of our judiciary to see that reflected in
2 our jurists is reassuring, assuring, and it's
3 very much appreciated. So credit to you for the
4 reputation that you've earned and the great
5 credit that you've caused to be reflected upon
6 our entire system. So thank you, sir.

7 JUDGE REIBOLD: Thank you.

8 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Seeing no other questions,
9 then that will bring this part of our screening
10 process to a close. I do need to take this
11 opportunity to remind you that pursuant to the
12 Commission's evaluative criteria, we take the
13 letter and as well as the spirit of our ethics
14 laws very seriously and would view any
15 violations or appearance of impropriety as
16 potentially deserving of very heavy weight in
17 our screening deliberations. On that note, and
18 as you know, the record will remain open until
19 the final release of the qualifications report
20 and should the need arise, we would have the
21 ability to call you back at that time. Again,
22 if the need should arise. Do you understand all
23 of that, sir?

24 JUDGE REIBOLD: I do.

25 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Thank you very

1 much. I appreciate your service to the state of
2 South Carolina. I appreciate you offering for
3 continued service and wish you all the best on
4 this very chilly Monday morning.

5 JUDGE REIBOLD: I drove back yesterday from
6 Pittsburgh for 10 hours in the snow, so this is
7 nice, actually.

8 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Oh, wow. Yeah, I don't wish
9 that on any of us. So thank you, Judge.
10 Appreciate you being here, sir.

11 JUDGE REIBOLD: All right, thank you all very much.

12 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right, we'll stand at ease
13 for a few minutes. We're waiting on one of our
14 folks to get here.

15 (Off the record)

16 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right, good morning. We
17 are back on the record and we'll resume with our
18 screening process. Judge Griffith, if you would
19 come to the podium, please, sir. If you would,
20 please raise your right hand.

21 M. ANDERSON GRIFFITH, having been first duly
22 sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

23 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. If you would,
24 please state your full name for the record.

25 JUDGE GRIFFITH: Maurice Anderson Griffith.

1 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Judge, there should be some
2 documents in front of you, a personal data
3 questionnaire and a sworn statement. If you
4 would, please take a second to review those.

5 JUDGE GRIFFITH: All right, I reviewed exhibit three
6 and four.

7 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Are there any changes or
8 updates that need to be made to those?

9 JUDGE GRIFFITH: I reviewed those over the weekend.
10 I don't think I have any changes to make.

11 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Do you have any objections to
12 us entering those into the record?

13 JUDGE GRIFFITH: I do not.

14 (EXHIBIT NO. 3 MARKED FOR
15 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (13
16 pages) PDQ)

17 (EXHIBIT NO. 4 MARKED FOR
18 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
19 Sworn Statement)

20 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. Let me give
21 staff a minute to do that. Judge, the Judicial
22 Merit Selection Commission has thoroughly
23 investigated your qualifications for the bench.
24 Our inquiry has focused on the nine evaluative
25 criteria and has included a thorough study of

1 your application materials, a ballot box survey,
2 verification of your compliance with state
3 ethics laws, a search of newspaper and other
4 media articles in which your name appears, a
5 study of any previous screenings, and a check
6 for economic conflicts of interest. We received
7 no affidavits filed in opposition to your
8 election and there are no witnesses present to
9 testify. If you would like to offer a brief
10 opening statement, we'd be happy to hear from
11 you, sir. Otherwise, I'd recognize staff
12 counsel for any questions -- or for questions.
13 Excuse me, I know there will be questions.

14 JUDGE GRIFFITH: I'd just like to thank the committee
15 for the effort y'all put into it, allowing us to
16 go through the process here. I know it takes
17 some time and effort on your part. I've been
18 the Master in Equity in Aiken since 2011. I've
19 enjoyed the service there. My private practice
20 was mostly in the Master in Equity court as it
21 developed and enjoyed serving the people of
22 Aiken County and hope to continue to do so.

23 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. Let me also
24 note before we go any further, extend the
25 Commission's appreciation to you for being here

1 for them to come and present their case, I think is
2 extremely important and I enjoy that work.

3 **Q. Judge Griffith, what do you think your reputation is**
4 **among attorneys that practice before you and court**
5 **personnel that work with you?**

6 A. I think on my staff or court personnel in the clerk's
7 office, I think it's good. I have had nobody
8 complain to me. Of course, if they work for me that
9 might be difficult, but I think it's good. As far as
10 with the attorneys, I try to treat everybody in a
11 professional manner, listen to the arguments. And so
12 I think -- I'm not aware of anything that is
13 adversarial about that as far as a relationship or
14 judge to advocate.

15 **Q. Judge Griffith, the Commission received 211 ballot**
16 **box surveys regarding you with 33 additional**
17 **comments. The ballot box survey, for example,**
18 **contained the following positive comments: Judge**
19 **Griffith has shown the combination of experience,**
20 **intellect and judicial demeanor to continue to**
21 **provide excellence in his service as Master in**
22 **Equity. Judge Griffith is doing an outstanding job**
23 **as Master in Equity. There are few sitting Masters**
24 **in Equity with as much experience as Judge Griffith.**
25 **His experience makes him an excellent judge of even**

1 the most complex real property issues. He is an
2 asset to the bench. None of the written comments
3 expressed any concerns.

4 MR. STIMSON: I would note that the Midlands Citizens
5 Committee found Judge Griffith qualified in the
6 evaluative criteria of constitutional
7 qualifications, physical health, mental
8 stability, and reputation. The Committee found
9 him well qualified in the evaluative criteria of
10 ethical fitness, professional and academic
11 ability, character, experience, and judicial
12 temperament. The Committee stated that Judge
13 Griffith is well qualified, no comment
14 necessary.

15 Q. We just have a few more issues, Judge. Since
16 submitting your letter of intent, have you contacted
17 any members of the commission about your candidacy?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Are you familiar with South Carolina Code Section
20 2-19-70 including the limitations on contacting
21 members of the General Assembly regarding your
22 screening?

23 A. I am.

24 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
25 sought or received the pledge of any legislator

1 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
2 your screening?

3 A. I have not.

4 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
5 of the General Assembly on your behalf or are you
6 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
7 process on your behalf?

8 A. I have not. I had one person raise that issue and I
9 specifically told him do not contact anybody.

10 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the
11 Commission's guidelines on pledging and South
12 Carolina Code Section 2-19-70E?

13 A. I believe I do, yes.

14 MR. STIMSON: I would just note for the record that
15 any concerns raised during the investigation
16 regarding Judge Griffith were incorporated in
17 the questioning of him today. Mr. Chairman, I
18 have no further questions.

19 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. Members of
20 the commission, have questions or comments for
21 Judge Griffith? Judge, I'm not seeing any right
22 now, which is not a bad thing. In fact, on the
23 record we have in front of us, I think that's a
24 great and telling testament to the reputation
25 you've earned during your time both practicing

1 law and as a judge in particular. Senator, did
2 you have something? Senator Garrett.

3 SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you for re-upping again.

4 JUDGE GRIFFITH: Thank you, sir.

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY SENATOR GARRETT:

7 **Q. It's important that we have experienced Masters in**
8 **Equity, especially with the change in the law as it**
9 **relates to partitions. I know that's been a big**
10 **issue for you Masters in Equity.**

11 A. Quite a few heirs partitions come through, yes, sir.

12 **Q. Have you found that the method that we employ now is**
13 **costing people a lot more money to get it done?**

14 A. I do find that we have to have quite a few hearings,
15 especially if you have some parties who file motions
16 that have to be heard separate from that and separate
17 hearings being set and the time that goes by. A lot
18 of times on these heir partition cases, of course,
19 you have families and you have members who have
20 passed away and sometimes during this quite a few of
21 them will have where they have to go in and amend the
22 pleadings because somebody's passed away during the
23 litigation, which extends the time. So some of them
24 get fairly lengthy and I know it gets more expensive
25 for people when that happens, so... I like the idea

1 behind it. It needs to be there, I think, because I
2 think people's property was -- people were being
3 taken advantage of in regards to that. If there was
4 any way to streamline the hearings, I think it would
5 benefit the litigants in regards to that.

6 **Q. We're going to be reaching out to masters like**
7 **yourself to try to help us work that law a little to**
8 **streamline it a little bit.**

9 A. Right.

10 SENATOR GARRETT: But thank you. Excellent
11 reputation. They said you could do this in your
12 sleep but they also said something there that it
13 got my attention. That you're firm. I always
14 liked my judges to be friendly, fair, but firm.
15 So thank you very much.

16 JUDGE GRIFFITH: Thank you.

17 SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. Any other
19 comments or questions? Judge, I'll just add to
20 some of the comments we see here. Excellent
21 judge, even the most complex real property
22 issues, courteous, knowledgeable, reasonable,
23 fair. I just want to extend my thanks to you,
24 sir, for your hard work and earning such a
25 reputation. It reflects greatly upon yourself

1 and the judiciary as a whole. And as we strive
2 to make sure that we have the best judiciary
3 possible for the state, it makes the job a lot
4 easier when we have folks such as yourself to
5 such a commendable job.

6 JUDGE GRIFFITH: Thank you.

7 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. That will
8 conclude this portion of the screening process.
9 Appreciate you being here early, sir. I do need
10 to take this moment to remind you that pursuant
11 to the Commission's evaluative criteria, we
12 expect candidates to follow the letter as well
13 as the spirit of our ethics laws and that we
14 will view any impropriety or appearance of
15 impropriety as very serious and potentially
16 deserving of very heavy weight in our screening
17 deliberations. And so on that note, as you
18 know, the record will remain open until the
19 release of the final qualifications report and
20 should the need arise, we can call you back
21 before the Commission again should that moment
22 arise. Do you understand all of that, sir?

23 JUDGE GRIFFITH: Yes, sir.

24 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All right. Thank you again
25 for your service to the state of South Carolina.

1 Thank you for offering for continued service and
2 we wish you all the best as you travel home
3 safely to Aiken.

4 JUDGE GRIFFITH: Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: Thank you, sir. The pending
6 question now is to go into executive session to
7 receive a legal briefing on motion of
8 Representative Jordan, seconded by Senator Saab.
9 All in favor signify by saying aye.

10 MEMBERS: Aye.

11 VICE CHAIRMAN CASKEY: All opposed, nay. The ayes
12 have it. We will go into executive session,
13 receive a legal briefing and ask all those folks
14 who are not legal members of our team to please
15 step out of the room. Thank you.

16 EXECUTIVE SESSION WAS HELD FROM 9:51 TO 10:26 AM)

17 (Off the record)

18 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Good morning.

19 JUDGE HEMPHILL: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. How are
20 you?

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. We are back on the
22 record. And for the record during executive
23 sessions, no votes were taken, no decisions were
24 made. We are now back to the flow of our
25 candidates. Judge Hemphill, correct?

1 JUDGE HEMPHILL: That is correct.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Raise your right hand, if you will,
3 please.

4 ROY HEMPHILL, having been first duly sworn, was
5 examined and testified as follows:

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: You have two documents, the PDQ and
7 the sworn statement. Are those ready to be
8 entered into the record without objection?

9 JUDGE HEMPHILL: They are.

10 (EXHIBIT NO. 5 MARKED FOR
11 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (13
12 pages) PDQ)

13 (EXHIBIT NO. 6 MARKED FOR
14 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
15 Sworn Statement)

16 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: If you'll hand those to Lindi.

17 Judge, you know our process here by which we
18 screen your candidacy for re-election, which
19 focuses on the nine evaluative criteria, which
20 includes the ballot box survey, thorough study
21 of your application materials, a check for your
22 compliance with state ethics laws, search of
23 newspaper articles in which your name appears,
24 past screenings, and check for economic
25 conflicts of interest. No opposition has been

1 filed, complaints or affidavits. No witnesses
2 are here to testify against you. In the
3 interest of time, which again, I appreciate your
4 being here early. You can hear me, but no one
5 else can, but now they can. We're not going to
6 go back and do it again. We will ask you to
7 dispense with an opening statement, but at the
8 end, if you have anything you'd like to say as a
9 closing comment, I will offer that to you. Ms.
10 Crawford will begin it, and then we'll go to
11 other members. Welcome.

12 JUDGE HEMPHILL: Thank you.

13 EXAMINATION

14 MS. CRAWFORD:

15 **Q. Good morning, Judge.**

16 A. Good morning.

17 **Q. Judge Hemphill, you have served as a part-time Master**
18 **in Equity in Abbeville County since, I believe, 2019.**
19 **Is that correct?**

20 A. That is correct.

21 **Q. Why do you want to continue in this role?**

22 A. That is a part-time position. It takes up about 10
23 percent of my time. The other 90 percent is a full
24 practitioner. I find it very fulfilling to see what
25 things on the other side of the practitioner's role

1 by sitting at the bench and being able to assist the
2 residents of Abbeville County, a lot of which are pro
3 se, in negotiating their way through the judicial
4 system and matters that appear before me.

5 **Q. Thank you, Judge. What do you think your reputation**
6 **is among attorneys that practice before you?**

7 A. I feel like I have a good reputation. I've been in
8 practice 34 years, working on 35, and I've enjoyed
9 the collegiality in the small bars -- county bars in
10 which I practice.

11 **Q. Judge Hemphill, the Commission received 250 ballot**
12 **box surveys regarding you with 11 comments, and none**
13 **of which were negative. The ballot box survey, for**
14 **example, contained the following positive comments.**
15 **Judge Hemphill has the most even temperament of any**
16 **lawyer I have ever known. He is an excellent judge.**
17 **He is extremely bright and quick and has a quick**
18 **grasp of any issue. Also, Roy Hemphill is a scholar**
19 **and a gentleman. He is courteous, kind, and**
20 **professional at all times.**

21 MS. CRAWFORD: I would note that the Piedmont
22 Citizens Committee found Judge Hemphill well
23 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical
24 fitness, professional and academic ability,
25 character, reputation, experience, and judicial

1 temperament, and qualified in the evaluative
2 criteria of constitutional qualifications,
3 physical health, and mental stability. The
4 committee commented, quote, Judge Hemphill
5 brings significant legal experience, keen
6 insight, and a good dose of common sense to his
7 judge as a part-time Master in Equity for
8 Abbeville County. The committee appreciates his
9 part-time service as a judge on top of his
10 regular legal practice and strongly recommends
11 him for another term.

12 **Q. Judge Hemphill, on your PDQ, you indicated that you**
13 **donated \$250 to a member of the General Assembly in**
14 **February of 2024. Looking at the Ethics Commission**
15 **website, it appears that you also made a \$100**
16 **donation in both 2018 and 2020 to school board**
17 **trustee candidates. I was concerned that these**
18 **donations might be a violation of Canon 5 of the**
19 **judicial conduct which prevents judges and candidates**
20 **from making political donations. I conferred with an**
21 **ethics counsel that shared this concern. You and I**
22 **have discussed this prior to the hearing and I'd like**
23 **to give you the opportunity to explain your donations**
24 **and understanding of the applicable canons.**

25 **A. Thank you. Yes, I am a part-time judge indicated**

1 about a 10 percent, 90 percent split and as a result
2 of that I am an active member in the profession. The
3 Canon 5 does have a fairly unambiguous exception that
4 says part-time judges are able to make political
5 contributions and acting upon that interpretation, I
6 did make -- have made those couple of donations in
7 the community, none of which I might add are in
8 Abbeville County. I live and am a resident and
9 practice mostly in the adjoining county of Greenwood
10 County and those -- those candidates were in
11 Greenwood County.

12 **Q. Thank you. I have a few housekeeping issues. Since**
13 **submitting your letter of intent, have you contacted**
14 **any members of this commission about your candidacy?**

15 A. I have not.

16 **Q. Are you familiar with 2-19-70 including limitations**
17 **on contacting members of the General Assembly**
18 **regarding your screening?**

19 A. Yes, I am.

20 **Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you**
21 **sought or received the pledge of any legislator**
22 **either prior to this date or pending the outcome of**
23 **your screening?**

24 A. I have not.

25 **Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members**

1 of the General Assembly on your behalf or are you
2 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
3 process?

4 A. I have not.

5 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the
6 commission's guidelines on pledging in South Carolina
7 Code Section 21970E?

8 A. I have and I do.

9 Q. Thank you, Judge.

10 MS. CRAWFORD: I would note for the record that any
11 concerns raised during the investigation
12 regarding this candidate were incorporated into
13 the questioning of him today. Mr. Chairman, I
14 have no further questions.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, questions by members of
16 the commission.

17 EXAMINATION

18 BY CHAIRMAN RANKIN:

19 Q. Judge, I want to ask in typical Rankin fashion kind
20 of an oddball chase the rabbit question. But Robert
21 Hemphill was in law school with me. We finished the
22 year that you started. The son of a judge, I
23 believe. Are y'all related?

24 A. We are. We're originally both from Chester and his
25 father and my father were first cousins. And he is

1 deceased, Robert is, about three years ago and he has
2 a fine legacy in two sons, one of which is a
3 freshman, a first year law student.

4 Q. I think he won -- and I'd never know how to say it --
5 Compleat Lawyer Award, Robert did, some years after
6 we graduated. But I always held him in very high
7 regard. Kind of like the Citizens Committee has
8 commented on your style, I didn't know his dad, but
9 just knew what a great family they were and so I
10 couldn't escape that without asking.

11 A. You're kind to mention that, thank you.

12 Q. Yeah, you've got a letter of reference here from a
13 dear friend of my wife's, Anne Marie Hempe, who is a
14 great lawyer, very well thought of and so in addition
15 to lots of other kind of things folks have said. I
16 am curious in the realm of your part-time service to
17 the folks there as compared to a full-time Master in
18 Equity in busier counties. You are steeped in the
19 law, you're steeped in the judicial canons of ethics.
20 Again, going forward I believe we're going to have
21 some clarity from our Supreme Court as to what can
22 and can't be done by any member of the bench but in
23 terms of conflicts for you in your practice as
24 pertains to something that might come before you with
25 a existing client or former client, how do you handle

1 **that if there is a conflict?**

2 A. So I recognize that there's a conflict by virtue of
3 internal things, internal mechanisms in the office
4 that would indicate that if I have a conflict then I
5 alert the parties to that conflict and let the
6 parties give their input. The ultimate decision as
7 to whether it's a conflict of interest lies with me
8 as a judicial officer. However, I certainly listen
9 to the parties and the litigants and note that on the
10 record when there is a record.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. Paul Agnew, also a classmate
12 as well, don't want the record to be -- to skip
13 his name, similarly well thought of lawyer.
14 Questions by any members of the commission? If
15 not, Judge, we want to thank you for offering
16 again to this position and thank you for doing
17 it well and to the plumb and applause of all who
18 have seen your service and who have vetted you
19 for re-election this campaign. So we thank you
20 for that.

21 JUDGE HEMPHILL: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: For the record, I did offer you the
23 opportunity to make a closing remark if you'd
24 like.

25 JUDGE HEMPHILL: I'll not do it this time. Mr.

1 Chairman and members of the Commission, thank
2 you for your consideration.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. So before you go, I've
4 got to get you to affirmatively acknowledge that
5 you know that we, this record will not be closed
6 until the formal release of the record of
7 qualifications. In the unlikely event you were
8 to run afoul of the letter or spirit of ethics
9 laws, you understand that we could call you back
10 for further questioning, correct?

11 JUDGE HEMPHILL: I understand that.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Judge, thank you so much. Happy
13 holidays to you.

14 JUDGE HEMPHILL: Thank you so much.

15 (Off the record)

16 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, sir. Welcome. If you
17 will, raise your right hand.

18 JAMES JOHN WEGMANN, having been first duly
19 sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: State your name for the record.

21 MR. WEGMANN: James John Wegmann, W-E-G-M-A-N-N.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very good. You have two documents,
23 the PDQ and the sworn statement. Are those
24 ready to be entered into the record without
25 objection?

1 MR. WEGMANN: Looks like I have three, sir. I've got
2 a sworn statement, PDQ, and an amendment to my
3 PDQ. And yes, sir, they are.

4 (EXHIBIT NO. 7 MARKED FOR
5 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (19
6 pages) PDQ)

7 (EXHIBIT NO. 8 MARKED FOR
8 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (1 pages)
9 Amendment)

10 (EXHIBIT NO. 9 MARKED FOR
11 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (8 pages)
12 Sworn Statement)

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. And do you pronounce it
14 Wegmann?

15 MR. WEGMANN: Wegmann, sir.

16 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Wegmann.

17 MR. WEGMANN: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Thank you. I will murder that if
19 you don't help me at the outset.

20 MR. WEGMANN: Not a problem, sir.

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Is that German?

22 MR. WEGMANN: Yes, sir.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. Your efforts and your
24 candidacy for selection to this position as a
25 Master in Equity, you understand that our role

1 is to focus on the nine evaluative criteria,
2 which includes your ballot box survey, thorough
3 study of your application materials, check for
4 economic conflicts of interest, search of
5 newspaper articles in which your name appears.
6 You've screened before?

7 MR. WEGMANN: No, sir.

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And therefore, no previous
9 screenings, and then check for economic
10 conflicts of interest. No complaints have been
11 filed in opposition to your candidacy. No
12 affidavits or witnesses are here to testify
13 against you. You are early and we are not, so
14 we will offer to you at the end, if you have
15 anything you'd like to offer by way of closing
16 statement, an opportunity to do that. We will
17 turn it over to Ms. Hall to start it, and then
18 we'll go from there.

19 MR. WEGMANN: Yes, sir.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Welcome.

21 EXAMINATION

22 MS. HALL:

23 **Q. Good morning, Mr. Wegmann.**

24 A. Good morning, Ms. Hall.

25 MS. HALL: I note for the record that based on the

1 testimony contained in the candidate's PDQ,
2 which has been included in the record with the
3 candidate's consent, James Wegmann meets the
4 statutory requirements for this position
5 regarding age, residence, and years of practice.

6 **Q. Mr. Wegmann, how do you feel your legal and**
7 **professional experience thus far renders you**
8 **qualified and will assist you to be an effective**
9 **Master in Equity?**

10 A. I've been practicing for about 30 -- a little over 30
11 years now, and most of my practice I have maintained
12 both the contractual side to my practice as well as
13 the litigation side of my practice. Most of the
14 matters on both sides of that practice are of the
15 type that generally find their way into the Master in
16 Equity's office. I have practiced outside of that
17 office. I've done some general sessions. I've done
18 some common pleas. I have litigated and done
19 contractual work and probate. I've done a couple
20 admin law litigation cases, but generally most of my
21 practice touches and concerns some type of real
22 property and generally are of the type that is seen
23 in the Master in Equity's office, and I've enjoyed
24 and had the privilege to practice before all three
25 Master in Equities in Beaufort County, Judge

1 Kimberlyn, Judge Coltrain, and of course, Judge
2 Dukes.

3 Q. Thank you. Mr. Wegmann, the commission received 167
4 ballot box surveys regarding you with 26 additional
5 comments. The ballot box survey, for example,
6 contained the following positive comments: A good
7 fellow, professionally and personally. Judicial
8 temperament and commitment to justice for all -- all
9 segments of our society. Open minded, but willing to
10 apply the law in a reasoned manner. Capacity to
11 understand complex legal issues. And Mr. Wegmann has
12 gone above and beyond in his service to our
13 community. He is always willing to volunteer his
14 time. Mr. Wegmann is well respected, dedicated,
15 intelligent, and hardworking. His patience, service,
16 and temperament are a model to all. None of the
17 written comments expressed any concerns.

18 MS. HALL: Citizens Committee report. I would note
19 that the Low Country Citizens Committee found
20 Mr. Wegmann qualified in the evaluative criteria
21 of constitutional qualifications, physical
22 health, and mental stability, and well qualified
23 in the evaluative criteria of ethical fitness,
24 professional and academic ability, character,
25 reputation, experience, and judicial

1 temperament. The committee noted conscientious,
2 detail oriented, very smart, good lawyer,
3 extremely well regarded, and an excellent fit
4 for this position.

5 **Q. Mr. Wegmann, your SLED report indicated a 2006 case,**
6 **Lorraine Miles versus City of Richmond. When we**
7 **discussed this, you indicated that was in fact not**
8 **you, but a different James Wegmann. Can you just**
9 **confirm that for the record?**

10 **A.** I have never been a plaintiff against the City of
11 Richmond. There was a James Wegmann, he is deceased,
12 don't believe he's a relative, there may be something
13 in the family tree, that lived in Sun City. I know
14 his son and daughter-in-law who live in Beaufort.
15 They were from the West Virginia, Virginia area. I'm
16 assuming it was that Mr. Wegmann.

17 **Q. Thank you. We just have a few housekeeping issues.**
18 **Mr. Wegmann, are you aware that as a judicial**
19 **candidate, you are bound by the Code of Judicial**
20 **Conduct as found in Rule 501 of the South Carolina**
21 **Appellate Court Rules?**

22 **A.** Yes, ma'am.

23 **Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you**
24 **contacted any members of the Commission about your**
25 **candidacy?**

1 A. No, ma'am.

2 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70, including the
3 limitations on contacting members of the General
4 Assembly regarding your screening?

5 A. Yes, ma'am.

6 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
7 sought or received the pledge of any legislator,
8 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
9 your screening?

10 A. No, ma'am.

11 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
12 of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you
13 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
14 process on your behalf?

15 A. No, ma'am.

16 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the
17 Commission's guidelines on pledging and South
18 Carolina Code 2-19-70E?

19 A. Yes, ma'am.

20 MS. HALL: Mr. Chairman, I would note for the record
21 that any concerns raised during the
22 investigation by staff regarding the candidate
23 were incorporated into the questioning of the
24 candidate today. I have no further questions.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: I forgot to, and I didn't see, but

1 Q. Very good. That is a beautiful answer to half of us,
2 surely. All halves here. I was a classmate with
3 Marvin Dukes, Judge Dukes, and saw him come through
4 here as a Master and re-elected a number of times.
5 And then his efforts to go to the circuit court
6 pitch. I know his style, never having appeared
7 before him, but you are to be complimented that folks
8 have written about you effectively pointing to you
9 and your style with the patience, with the academic
10 acumen, the ability, and the law practice that you've
11 had to be his successor. Why in the world would you
12 want to leave the fun of HOA representation and
13 client expectation and management to become a judge?

14 A. It's a great question. When it appeared that Judge
15 Dukes was going to make the transition over to the
16 circuit court, and of course, when I congratulated
17 him well before the General Assembly met, he, in
18 perfect Judge Dukes style, said don't do that until
19 it happens, you know, et cetera. But he's been very
20 generous with his time. And so, I took to -- I'd
21 looked at it originally in, I think it was 2006, when
22 Judge Dukes ran, but to be honest, I was not at a
23 point in my life, and I probably didn't have the
24 depth or the breadth of practice that would be
25 necessary at that time. I didn't know that he would

1 be there 17 years, but he was a phenomenal master.
2 And when it appeared he was going to transition, I
3 sat down with him, talked to him about the job, went
4 through what I thought it was as compared to what it
5 actually was. I was approached by a number of other
6 members of the local bar about potentially applying
7 and running. Sat down with my wife, had some long
8 discussions, but I'm at a point in my life that, to
9 me, it kind of made sense. I don't know how long
10 I'll continue to practice. I'm 61. I think there's
11 a good 10 plus years, if the Lord's willing. But it
12 just kind of made sense to me on a couple of levels.
13 The first level is, I get to continue to serve the
14 people of Beaufort County. But with a twist now, I
15 also get to serve the members of the bar. And I
16 think the master's office, generally, at least in
17 Beaufort County, has a responsibility and with the
18 three masters prior, it's just a great place to
19 practice law. You can get day certain trials, you
20 can get things heard -- and I'm not picking on
21 circuit court, but you can get things heard generally
22 quicker. And that service to the community and
23 service to the bar now intrigues me and makes me want
24 to finish a career, if I can, in that office. So I
25 hope that answers your question.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: It does. You of note, and Ms.
2 Wegmann, for your benefit, rarely do we get a
3 candidate who folks comment anonymously about --
4 lawyers get to comment anonymously about where
5 there is nary not one negative comment made
6 about the candidate. Your husband is one of
7 those rare Gamecock Tiger birds or Iowa or Iowa
8 State kind of guys that that applies to. So you
9 are, sir, to be greatly complimented on making
10 that mark. Questions by any other members of
11 the commission? Representative Caskey.

12 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And, Mr. Wegmann, at the chairman's prodding,
14 I'll just as a washed up, overweight marine
15 salute you for your service and also note that I
16 find it perhaps a -- perhaps an indicator of
17 your honesty with your kids that they have both
18 joined the Air Force and come to enjoy their
19 service in that line of work. I suppose their
20 lives are much more comfortable for having made
21 those decisions. Thank you, sir.

22 MR. WEGMANN: Thank you for your service, sir.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Mr. Safran.

24 MR. SAFRAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 EXAMINATION

1 BY MR. SAFRAN:

2 Q. Just quickly, I began my private practice in Beaufort
3 before you and had left by the time you got there, I
4 think.

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. I knew all three. I remember when Judge Kemmerlin
7 took over down there and he was just as brilliant as
8 they come. I knew Judge Coltrain because I actually
9 litigated against him during my time down there. I
10 mean, if you were to kind of say, Okay, what are the
11 best parts of each that you might say that you would
12 want to adopt or try to emulate in your own
13 particular style, what would they be?

14 A. For Judge Kemmerlin, and I was fresh out of the
15 Marine Corps when I started practicing in front of
16 Judge Kemmerlin, the one thing, and I was used to
17 military judges, which are completely different.

18 Q. From him, absolutely.

19 A. From most judges. But for him, his quiet intellect
20 is where I would go. You'd wonder at times whether
21 or not -- and you had to prepare your clients for
22 him. But you'd wonder at times whether he was truly
23 listening or that, and then he'd look at you and go
24 would you like me to repeat everything that you just
25 said, counsel? No, sir, you know. But he was always

1 prepared and he just had this intellectual capacity
2 about everything, not just the law. For Judge
3 Coltrain, Judge Coltrain wasn't on the bench nearly
4 as long, but got to know him well before, during, and
5 then I've had some things afterwards with him. And
6 kind of the same thing. At certain times he'd remind
7 me of certain military judges. Little things like
8 we'd be in a different motion and he'd go, has either
9 counsel read this particular case? It's pending
10 before the -- you know, the Board of Appeals. And
11 then no, sir. You might want to go read that because
12 it may have something to do with the outcome of this,
13 so I'm going to hold it in abeyance. But he, again,
14 that kind of intellect, being prepared and being
15 ahead of the game as I looked at it from a judge's
16 standpoint. And then Judge Dukes was just a very
17 even-tempered, even-keeled -- I think in the 17 years
18 that I practiced before him, I think I saw him raise
19 his voice once. And he did it in a very polite and
20 nice way, but, and it shouldn't have happened, but it
21 did. And I just always liked about him the way he
22 handled the courtroom, made everybody feel
23 comfortable and at home. And, you know, we got down
24 to business. But he just could really -- his
25 temperament is something to be emulated. So I hope

1 that answers your question.

2 Q. I guess what you're telling me is, in their own way,
3 all three were effective. It was just a matter of
4 kind of how they approached it.

5 A. Yep.

6 MR. SAFRAN: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Other questions? Senator Saab.

8 SENATOR SAAB: Thanks, Chairman.

9 EXAMINAITON

10 BY SENATOR SABB:

11 Q. And I too want to join and thank you for your
12 service. I was reading this Antonelli versus Mahoney
13 case.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. And it just really kind of sprung my curiosity. And
16 I guess my bottom line on it -- and for the
17 edification of members of the commission, you might
18 want to give us a brief synopsis of it, but I'm
19 curious about where the money came from in the
20 settlement. So I want to get to that end, but give
21 us a brief synopsis of it, if you don't mind, please.

22 A. So I didn't start the case. It started out with,
23 he's now retired, with Jeff North out of Hilton Head.
24 The Antonelli's purchased a home, and unfortunately
25 the seller of the home, who was the vice president of

1 Sutton Bank in Ohio, was making an additional living
2 mortgage fraud. And he was the vice president of
3 lending for Sutton Bank. But essentially what he did
4 in that particular case, and others -- I think when
5 we finally got down to the bottom of it, we thought
6 it was about \$36 million that he had rolled between
7 the various transactions between Ohio, South
8 Carolina, and Georgia. But what he did in this
9 particular case, and he had done in the other cases,
10 is he forged a payoff that sent the one point
11 whatever million dollar payoff --

12 **Q. One point three.**

13 A. Something like that. To his son's bank account at
14 Bank of America. So the payoff looked good, but the
15 ABA number and the account number went to his son's
16 bank account. And then what he was doing until he
17 got way ahead of himself was he would pay the
18 mortgage on that with some of the monies he was
19 collecting from the various transactions or the
20 various fraudulent transactions. And at some point
21 it all caught up with him.

22 **Q. A quasi Ponzi scheme?**

23 A. For the most part. I call it rolling. And they just
24 continue to roll until such a time as it catches up
25 and then they don't have the money to pay it off,

1 which is what happened here. So the case, Mr. North
2 got it started, brought me in because there was a
3 title claim on it, and then he got out and kind of
4 left me with it. But it started in federal court,
5 moved to state court because the mortgage company,
6 Wells Fargo, actually filed foreclosure actions
7 against my clients for the mortgage that sat on there
8 that wasn't theirs. They paid cash for the, you
9 know, multi-million dollar home down on Hilton Head.

10 **Q. Yeah.**

11 A. But I will say it was Judge Dukes who -- in the end,
12 we had things going on in federal court, things going
13 on in state court. It got rather complex and all the
14 parties were the same in both places. And Judge
15 Dukes was the one at one of the motions hearing, he
16 said is there anything we can do to help? And I said
17 Judge, if you could order everybody to a global
18 mediation, that would be wonderful. So we did. We
19 ended up -- that was one of the longest mediations
20 I've ever been a part of. I think I got home from
21 Charleston at like 4:00 in the morning. Long story
22 short, there was a fire alarm in the middle of it.
23 We were getting nowhere during the day at all. So
24 everybody's standing out and there were a lot of
25 people there between the different insurance

1 companies, the title companies, the lawyers
2 malpractice insurance company. I mean, and all of a
3 sudden people were off talking. The lawyers were
4 over here, but the litigants were all off talking.
5 And we were like, well, the fire alarm's over, we
6 could -- no, we're going to stand here a while and
7 see what happens.

8 **Q. Yeah.**

9 A. And finally, when we got back in late afternoon,
10 things started to move and about midnight we actually
11 got it settled. Wells Fargo had to -- they didn't
12 get everything they wanted. But the money didn't
13 come from my clients. The money came from the
14 different insurance companies and that to pay as much
15 as they were willing to pay toward the mortgage. I
16 ended up with a never collect federal judgment. I
17 think he is still doing time in a West Virginia
18 penitentiary.

19 **Q. Thank you.**

20 A. But it was just an interesting case. And Judge Dukes
21 was kind of the one that said hey, we're going to --
22 I'm going to order a global settlement. You all go
23 to mediation. So it ended up working out.

24 SENATOR SAAB: Thank you, sir.

25 MR. WEGMANN: Yes, sir.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Total segue here, but this warrants
2 a mention of the Motley Fool, which is a
3 investment financial literacy kind of entity,
4 the Gardner Brothers. And they in one recent
5 Halloween ghoulish surprise kind of thing talked
6 about not that case, but how in South Carolina
7 it would be a similar effort where cash paid
8 clear record showing it's owned and someone
9 effectively selling it all by way of fraud. And
10 the folks that actually owned it who didn't live
11 here full time come discover that their place is
12 occupied by people that how in the world did
13 they get here? So that could be not American
14 Greed material, but next October Halloween's
15 Motley Fool update. So thank you for that,
16 Senator Saab and Mr. Wegmann for that response.
17 Anything else? If not, again, I will offer you
18 the opportunity to make a closing statement if
19 you like.

20 MR. WEGMANN: Other than to say thank you to your
21 staff. It's been a pleasure. I'm sure I'm way
22 over my quota of questions to all three of them.
23 But it's been a pleasure to learn about the
24 process, go through the process as well as the
25 staffs of the Citizens Committee and the bar.

1 I'll be honest, I didn't know the depth of the
2 process when I applied. But your staff has been
3 fabulous through the process and I thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Well, I'm going to follow that up
5 with any suggestions on how this could be made
6 better, less intrusive, more intrusive or
7 invasive?

8 MR. WEGMANN: My impression is that it's intrusive
9 for a reason. And it's not a reason that I take
10 umbrage with. It's there for a purpose. And so
11 I don't have any issues with that whatsoever.
12 For smaller practitioners like myself in a small
13 law firm of three, it gets to be a little
14 interesting for me personally over time with
15 dealing with clients. So what do I do with my
16 litigation practice if I am fortunate enough to
17 get the possibility to actually serve as a
18 master? I made a decision back in May or June
19 to not take on any new litigation just in case
20 because I didn't want to look at clients, you
21 know, if it were to come about and say hey, I'm
22 sorry, here's your file. You got to go find
23 somebody else. So it's -- and there's really
24 nothing I think you can do about that because of
25 the process. But it does, at times, made me

1 think about my practice. The downside to it,
2 and I've told a number of people this is, it's
3 not really a downside. If I weren't appointed,
4 it's okay. I got to take a hard look at my
5 practice the last six months and go what do I
6 like? What do I don't like? If I'm not elected
7 and I go back to practice, which is great, what
8 do I want to do for the next ten or so years?
9 Do I want to keep doing this or do I want to
10 pare down and just do this? So in that respect,
11 it's been helpful. So I hope that answers your
12 question.

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: It does. All right, Mr. Wegmann,
14 thank you again. One last exchange on our part
15 that you understand that this record is not
16 closed until the formal release of the record of
17 qualifications. Any violation by you of the
18 letter or the spirit of the ethics laws would
19 warrant us calling you back for further
20 questions. We don't expect that, but we ask
21 every candidate that and get a verbal
22 affirmation.

23 MR. WEGMANN: Yes, sir, I understand.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. Thank you all for
25 coming. Thank you for your patience with us and

1 Amendment)
2 (EXHIBIT NO. 12 MARKED FOR
3 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)
4 Sworn Statement)

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. Mr. Geddings, you know this
6 process by which we vet your candidacy as the
7 other steps along all candidates way to
8 selection. We look at the nine evaluative
9 criteria which includes the ballot box survey,
10 thorough study of your application materials,
11 check for economic -- compliance to ethics laws,
12 and economic conflicts of interest, study of
13 previous screenings, and a search for newspaper
14 articles in which your name appears. No
15 affidavits have been filed in opposition to your
16 candidacy. No complaints. Given the interest
17 of time, you are 10:45 we're about 18 minutes
18 late. I'll offer you the opportunity for a
19 closing statement if you'd like but let's turn
20 it over to Ms. Starnes for questions and then
21 members of the Commission, if that suits you.

22 MR. GEDDINGS: That's fine. If I could just make --
23 answer a couple of the questions I know you're
24 going to have real quick. But go ahead, we'll
25 do it.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Perhaps you are reading Ms.
2 Starnes' mind. Let's see. But let's let her
3 direct and then if she hasn't asked then you can
4 volunteer them.

5 MS. STARNES: Good morning, Mr. Geddings. Mr.
6 Chairman I note for the record that based on the
7 testimony contained in the candidate's PDQ which
8 has been included in the record with the
9 candidate's consent, Mr. Geddings meets the
10 statutory requirements for this position
11 regarding age, residence, and years of practice.

12 EXAMINATION

13 MS. STARNES:

14 **Q. Mr. Geddings, how do you feel your legal and**
15 **professional experience thus far renders you**
16 **qualified and will assist you to be an effective**
17 **Master in Equity?**

18 A. Thank you, ma'am. I think it will help me because
19 I've basically been doing master in equity work for
20 30 years in Clarendon County. In Clarendon, our
21 Master in Equity was Billy Coffey for years. Then
22 when he stepped down his son, Joe Coffey, took over
23 but they are also the largest real estate firm in the
24 county so on the majority of foreclosures, they have
25 a conflict of interest and I'm appointed as special

1 referee. So I've been doing that for 30 years. And
2 in Berkeley when Judge moved up from Master in Equity
3 to circuit judge a lot of the foreclosure firms
4 couldn't find anybody to do the foreclosures, asked
5 if I would do it and I agreed, and currently I've got
6 more than 60 cases in Berkeley County that I'm doing
7 as special referee. I've taught classes to masters
8 in equity and judges about quiet title issues. I've
9 written articles for the South Carolina Bar Magazine.
10 I just think that this will be something that I do
11 know about, I've done, I like doing it, and I think I
12 could do a good job.

13 **Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. Geddings, the Commission**
14 **received 115 ballot box surveys regarding you with 11**
15 **additional comments. The ballot box survey contained**
16 **the following positive comments: Mr. Geddings would**
17 **make an excellent master. I have had the privilege**
18 **of working with Mr. Geddings for many years as an**
19 **attorney as special referee and have been impressed**
20 **with his knowledge his thoroughness and his**
21 **temperament. One of the written comments expressed**
22 **concerns about your ability to be fair and impartial.**
23 **What response would you offer to this concern?**

24 **A. Well, I've been practicing since 1988 and during that**
25 **time, you're going to have some people that like you**

1 and some people that don't. Some cases -- you know,
2 we don't get to pick our facts and so I'd be shocked
3 if I hadn't rubbed somebody the wrong way. But by
4 and large, I can be fair and impartial. Somebody
5 said one time that it's not enough that the process
6 be fair, it has to appear fair. And so I try to bend
7 over backwards to be sure that I'm being fair to both
8 sides. And that's the best that I can respond to it.

9 **Q. All right. And, Mr. Geddings, you have been involved**
10 **in two lawsuits since your last screening. And the**
11 **first was in 2019 where you filed a suit against**
12 **Blaster Boys LLC over property maintenance costs and**
13 **nuisance allegations. Would you please explain the**
14 **nature and disposition of this lawsuit?**

15 **A.** That lawsuit was -- there's a pond that's half on my
16 property and half on theirs. And my belief was that
17 both parties are responsible for a common resource
18 like that. They took a different point of view. We
19 had mediation back at the first this year and we
20 reached an agreement, and I had everything drafted
21 but the other attorney and I are still going back and
22 forth about it. I think that -- I've been asking
23 them to meet me at the property so we can show where
24 things are that it will be fine but they just haven't
25 met with me yet. It's lasted for so long because it

1 hit right at COVID so it was one of the ones that got
2 put on the back burner.

3 **Q. Okay, thank you.**

4 MS. STARNES: Mr. Chairman, I would now request that
5 we go into executive session to discuss a legal
6 and financial matter.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and second.
8 All in favor say aye. All right, we will now go
9 in executive session and ask guests and
10 non-lawyer attendees to likewise leave.

11 EXECUTIVE SESSION WAS HELD FROM 11:08 TO 12:04 PM

12 (Off the record)

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, we are back on the
14 record and for the record, in executive session
15 no votes were taken, no decisions cast. Only a
16 briefing on legal matters. Ms. Starnes, we'll
17 turn it back over to you. Thank you.

18 MS. STARNES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 MS. STARNES CONTINUED:

20 **Q. Mr. Geddings, you were named a defendant in a second**
21 **lawsuit that was filed in 2020 which was a**
22 **foreclosure and lis pendens action by New Residential**
23 **Mortgage LLC that involves your personal residence.**
24 **Would you please explain the nature and disposition**
25 **of this lawsuit as it is a matter of public record?**

1 A. Yes, ma'am. That lawsuit was because family, the
2 Crawfords, owned the property that we live in and in
3 2014, they couldn't make the payments, couldn't sell
4 it so they moved to Georgia and filed for bankruptcy.
5 At that time, there was a first and second mortgage
6 from a lender and I don't remember that name off-
7 hand. That mortgage, when they filed bankruptcy the
8 mortgage holders filed for and received permission to
9 proceed with a foreclosure. They then did nothing
10 and by 2018, the house was in a very dilapidated
11 condition. There were all kind of problems. The
12 floor joists had rotted. The air conditioner units
13 had to be totally replaced. It was a lot of damage.
14 When we needed a place to live and didn't have much
15 time, we found an attorney who knew the Crawfords and
16 the Crawfords sold it to us with a quit claim deed.
17 Then we tried to find a bank to negotiate a payoff.
18 We had an immense problem trying to find a bank.
19 Everyone that we would contact said no, we don't know
20 anything about it. There were no assignments.
21 Apparently, it had been assigned to Greentree. Then
22 it was assigned to Dytek although Greentree and Dytek
23 kept saying they didn't know anything about it. Then
24 when it was assigned to New Residential, finally a
25 lawsuit was filed to foreclose. We were excited

1 because that gave us a person to deal with. We
2 brought a counterclaim for the improvements that
3 we've done, for saying that they waited too long to
4 bring it, for saying that the mortgage was recorded
5 and done before the deed was so we're questioning
6 that. We're also questioning the amount that their
7 claiming is owed under the belief that it should have
8 stopped with the filing of the bankruptcy. The lien
9 remains but not that. So the current lawsuit is to
10 foreclose and sell the land. There are no claims
11 against us. We are involved because we're the
12 current landowner subject to that mortgage. So if we
13 were to walk away, there's no debt that we would owe,
14 there's no judgment that could be pending against us.
15 Hopefully we would end up getting a judgment saying
16 that if the property is sold, we get a portion of it.
17 If the property is sold at auction, we could bid on
18 it. So did that answer your question?

19 **Q. Yes, sir. Thank you. Mr. Geddings, I would note**
20 **that the Lowcountry Citizens Committee found you to**
21 **be well qualified in the evaluative criteria of**
22 **ethical fitness, professional and academic ability,**
23 **character, reputation, experience, and judicial**
24 **temperament and qualified in the evaluative criteria**
25 **of physical health, mental stability, and**

1 constitutional qualifications. The committee noted:
2 extremely well qualified, extensive experience as a
3 special referee, compassionate, smart, extremely
4 personable, wise about the law and life. Before we
5 conclude, Mr. Geddings, I have a few housekeeping
6 issues to address with you. Are you aware that as a
7 judicial candidate you are bound by the Code of
8 Judicial Conduct as found in Rule 501 of the South
9 Carolina Appellate Court rules?

10 A. Yes, ma'am.

11 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
12 contacted any members of the Commission about your
13 candidacy?

14 A. No, ma'am, I haven't.

15 Q. Are you familiar with section 2-19-70 including the
16 limitations on contacting members of the General
17 Assembly regarding your screening?

18 A. Yes, ma'am.

19 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
20 sought or received the pledge of any legislator
21 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
22 your screening?

23 A. No, ma'am, I haven't.

24 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
25 of the General Assembly on your behalf or are you

1 **aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this**
2 **process on your behalf?**

3 A. No, I haven't and I'm not aware of anyone.

4 **Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the**
5 **Commission's guidelines on pledging and South**
6 **Carolina Code section 2-19-70E?**

7 A. Yes, ma'am.

8 **Q. Thank you.**

9 MS. STARNES: Mr. Chairman, I would note for the
10 record that any concerns raised during the
11 investigation by staff regarding Mr. Geddings
12 were incorporated into the questioning of him
13 today. I have no further questions.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. Members of the Commission,
15 any questions for Mr. Geddings? All right, sir.
16 Well, Mr. Geddings, I appreciate your
17 willingness to offer and your -- Ms. Geddings,
18 thank you for joining him today. I want to
19 remind you, as you know, that our Commission
20 takes very seriously the ethics law. Any
21 violation of the appearance of the spirit or the
22 letter of the law would be taken very seriously
23 by us. And for the record, I need you to
24 acknowledge that you know that this record is
25 not closed until the formal release of the

1 record of qualifications.

2 MR. GEDDINGS: Yes, sir.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: In the unlikely event there would
4 be something, you do know that we could call you
5 back.

6 MR. GEDDINGS: Yes, sir.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. All right, thank you
8 both for being here and --

9 MR. GEDDINGS: Can I make one quick statement?

10 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: I'm sorry. You know what, I did
11 offer to you and my apologies. Thank you. The
12 floor is yours.

13 MR. GEDDINGS: Thank you very much. I just want to
14 point out that about two months ago, our
15 daughter and son-in-law gave birth to our first
16 grandchild. They live in Summerville and so far
17 my wife and I have been burning up the road
18 going back and forth to Summerville. So we're
19 excited at the chance of moving closer and
20 Berkeley County, I didn't realize, but it's just
21 right across I-26 from Summerville. So this
22 came about and I remain very excited because it
23 lets us get closer to him. When I've run for
24 judgeship before, I never thought about being a
25 master in equity because in Clarendon County,

1 master in equity gets paid about \$8,000 a year
2 because we're a small county and we don't have
3 much. In Berkeley County, I was stunned to see
4 that it is a big one. It's a full-time job and
5 I hadn't realized that it was a full-time job in
6 other places. So when this opportunity came up
7 with Judge Van Slambrook moving up, it just all
8 seemed to coincide and blend together. Here we
9 are moving closer to our grandson. It's a great
10 thing to do. It's an area that I'm
11 knowledgeable about. The other foreclosure law
12 firms couldn't get anyone to do hearings there.
13 So, as I mentioned, I currently have over 60
14 cases that I'm handling in Berkeley. I know
15 some people may view becoming a master in equity
16 as a stepping stone to another kind of a
17 judgeship. I want to assure the committee that
18 although I've been here before for other things,
19 this is what I want. This is what I know I can
20 do. I'm not -- if you were to offer me any
21 judgeship in the state right now including
22 Supreme Court, this is what I want to do. It's
23 what I know about, it's what I'd like, and it's
24 where I'd like. We plan to move to Berkeley
25 County if I'm appointed and elected so that

1 shouldn't be an issue. I was born when my
2 parents were in forestry school in Florida, the
3 first place we moved back in South Carolina was
4 Moncks Corner. So in a way it's kind of a
5 coming home. But I hope that you'll give it due
6 consideration and I hope that issues about the
7 situation with our house won't cloud your
8 judgment because, again, even if we just walked
9 away from it, it's nothing to do and I hope that
10 you won't let that overshadow my qualifications
11 for this, my excitement for it, my desire for
12 it, and I appreciate your time.

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And I am remiss not to, in front of
14 your wife particularly, hold you up in terms of
15 the ballot box surveys, the folks who've taken
16 the time to participate and you have wonderful
17 letters of reference from folks that do know you
18 and have said great things about you as an
19 attorney. So with that now, and I apologize for
20 not remembering, we are greatly delayed in
21 starting your interview and greatly delayed in
22 finishing it. But I wish you well, both of you
23 on this wonderful holiday season. Blessings to
24 you all as grandparents as well.

25 MR. GEDDINGS: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Take care.

2 (Off the Record)

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, sir, welcome. Mr. West,
4 we are right on time at 11:15. For the record,
5 there was one chuckle. The court reporter will
6 mark this as 12:15. I want to welcome you.
7 First, let me have you raise your right hand.
8 J. CAMDEN WEST, having been first duly sworn,
9 was examined and testified as follows:

10 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: You've got two documents, the PDQ
11 and the sworn statement. Are those ready to be
12 entered into the record without objection?

13 MR. WEST: They are.

14 (EXHIBIT NO. 13 MARKED FOR
15 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (17
16 pages) PDQ)

17 (EXHIBIT NO. 14 MARKED FOR
18 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (1 pages)
19 Amendment)

20 (EXHIBIT NO. 15 MARKED FOR
21 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (6 pages)
22 Sworn Statement)

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. And you have a couple
24 of guests with you. I believe I recognize a
25 very young looking fellow. You want to

1 introduce the young and the old?

2 MR. WEST: Well, I'll start with the younger one
3 which is my father, John.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: That's who I'm talking about.

5 MR. WEST: He is affectionately known as Pappy.
6 That's his granddaddy name. And then I have my
7 brother Mason who is here with us today. Both
8 of them are my law partners.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very good. Mason's hair is
10 decidedly grayer than your father's. I don't
11 know what to make of that.

12 MR. WEST: It can turn gray as long as it doesn't
13 turn loose. Mine's running away.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: You said it, I didn't. Mr. West,
15 as we -- along your path to become a considered
16 candidate, you know the process that you
17 participated in and our role and the nine
18 evaluative criteria that we hold up as our lens
19 for your candidacy, which includes a ballot box
20 survey, thorough study of your application
21 materials, check for economic conflicts of
22 interest, verification of your compliance with
23 the state ethics laws, search of newspaper
24 articles in which your name appears. You have
25 not screened before, I don't believe, have you?

1 MR. WEST: This is my first time.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. And so no affidavits or
3 complaints have been filed in opposition to your
4 candidacy. I'm going to offer you a opportunity
5 to make a closing statement if you don't believe
6 we've covered everything thoroughly enough given
7 this late hour. And, again, my apologies for
8 the delay in getting to your candidacy. So we
9 will turn it over to Mr. Stimson for questions
10 and then to members of the Commission if they
11 have any.

12 MR. STIMSON: I note for the record that based on the
13 testimony contained in the candidate's PDQ which
14 has been included in the record with the
15 candidate's consent, J. Camden West meets the
16 statutory requirements for this position
17 regarding age, residence, and years of practice.

18 EXAMINATION

19 MR. STIMSON:

20 **Q. Mr. West, how do you feel your legal and professional**
21 **experience thus far renders you qualified and will**
22 **assist you to be an effective master in equity?**

23 A. My legal experience is intertwined and combined with
24 my family experience. I am 39 years old. I have
25 been working in the West Law Firm in Moncks Corner

1 for 19 years. I've been practicing law for 14 years.
2 I've had extensive legal experience in the Masters
3 Court itself, which is a seat I am seeking. But more
4 so, I've had family lessons that I've been taught.
5 I've had the distinct luxury and pleasure of working
6 with my father, working with my brother, and working
7 with my mother. My father, John, who is here with me
8 today, has instilled in me a level of confidence and
9 commitment to my community and certain lessons that
10 have been passed on and I hope to pass on not only to
11 my children but to future generations of lawyers in
12 this state. Being a father is the greatest pleasure
13 of my life. The greatest privilege of my life is
14 being my father's son. There are certain life
15 lessons that have been learned in the practice of law
16 over the last almost 15 years. My father has told
17 me, he has shown me, he has taught me, and most
18 importantly he has let me. He let go of the
19 handlebars. He let me learn how to be a lawyer.
20 More importantly he let me learn how to be a father.
21 The lessons learned as being a father, I have three
22 kids. I have an 11 year old boy who has just entered
23 middle school. I have never been less prepared for
24 something in my life than having a middle schooler.
25 I have a 9 year old girl, Elle, who is my little

1 princess who is in fourth grade and I have a 7 year
2 old boy who is in second grade, James. James is the
3 baby. Every child teaches you a new lesson. It's a
4 new learning experience. But these lessons directly
5 translate to the practice of law, to the management
6 of experiences in a family law firm which are always
7 challenging, and directly to the bench. Patience,
8 perseverance, endeavor to endure, persevere to be
9 patient, kindness, structure, discipline but more
10 importantly they teach you to never stop being a good
11 person, never stop becoming a better person. These
12 are the -- the microphone echoed back on me. I'm
13 sorry. These are the lessons I have learned from my
14 father and from the practice of law and more so my
15 mother. I have spent 19 years working 10 feet from
16 my mother, which is a very, very unique experience.
17 I don't know too many people who can say that. Have
18 you ever had your mother standing over your shoulder
19 for 19 years? My mother is a sweetheart. Her
20 lessons are known by her and I and this is our
21 combination of Pris's principles. Pris's principles
22 are twofold. One, don't be a jerk and two, if Mama
23 West can't hear you say it or see you do it, you
24 don't need to be saying it, you don't need to be
25 doing it. In other words, would mama be proud? If

1 my mama was watching me in courtroom whether before
2 the bench or on the bench, would my mama be proud?
3 But at the end of the day, why I'm prepared to be the
4 master in equity is because I've been taught how to
5 be a good person. There is no greater challenge but
6 there is no greater reward than to be a good person.
7 Also, I enjoy equity. I love the law. I love
8 practicing law. I love the subject matter of equity
9 and I've loved the master in equities before us.
10 We've had -- in my career, we've had two master in
11 equities, Judge Watson and Judge Van Slambrook.
12 These two individuals have been the example. If
13 anything I can take from them after 14 years of
14 appearing in front of them, it is that they are the
15 example. Be the example. The example of what it
16 means to uphold the judicial oath and what it means
17 to be a good person. My abilities as a lawyer, my
18 commitment to my community, and the lessons learned
19 practicing law with my family, as a father, as my
20 father's son, and as a lawyer make me confident in my
21 abilities to serve as master in equity for Berkeley
22 County.

23 **Q. Thank you. The Commission received 130 ballot box**
24 **surveys regarding you with 14 additional comments.**
25 **The ballot box survey, for example, contained the**

1 following positive comments: Cam would make a great
2 master. Cam has an excellent demeanor and great
3 understanding of property law. He is absolutely
4 perfect for this job. And great candidate. Excellent
5 reputation for integrity and competence. None of the
6 written comments expressed concerns.

7 MR. STIMSON: I would note that the Lowcountry
8 Citizens Committee found J. Camden West
9 qualified in the evaluative criteria of
10 constitutional qualifications, physical health,
11 and mental stability. The committee found him
12 well qualified in the evaluative criteria of
13 ethical fitness, professional and academic
14 ability, character, reputation, and experience,
15 and judicial temperament. The committee stated
16 in summary, great experience, bright, energetic,
17 and well qualified.

18 Q. I just have a few housekeeping issues, Mr. West. Are
19 you aware that as a judicial candidate, you are bound
20 by the Code of Judicial Conduct as found in Rule 501
21 of the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules?

22 A. I am.

23 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
24 contacted any members of the commission about your
25 candidacy?

1 A. I have not.

2 Q. Are you familiar with South Carolina Code Section
3 2-19-70, including the limitations on contacting
4 members of the General Assembly regarding your
5 screening?

6 A. I am.

7 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
8 sought or received the pledge of any legislator,
9 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
10 your screening?

11 A. I have not.

12 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
13 of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you
14 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
15 process on your behalf?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the
18 Commission's guidelines on pledging in South Carolina
19 Code Section 2-19-70E?

20 A. I have.

21 MR. STIMSON: Mr. Chairman, I would note for the
22 record that any concerns raised during the
23 investigation regarding Mr. West were
24 incorporated in the questioning of him today. I
25 have no further questions.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Questions by members of
2 the Commission?

3 EXAMINATION

4 BY CHAIRMAN RANKIN:

5 Q. I want to just take a quick brief opportunity to make
6 a comment about some of these ballot box survey
7 comments beyond the folks whose letters you've read
8 that you know what they've said about you. Mr.
9 Stimson touched on a couple of these. But one in
10 particular in terms of their urging us to give you a
11 very close, hard look, which initially sounds
12 negative, but in fact it is more praise of their
13 disappointment that despite your years of preparing
14 for serving on the bench, they would wish you would
15 go to the circuit court instead of the Master in
16 Equity. So that in terms of your organization, your
17 empathy in difficult, complex cases that you have
18 apparently been involved with, again, folk, far folk,
19 interacting with people in the courtroom and in the
20 legal community, again, these folks could say a lot
21 worse and are saying good things about you. I do
22 want to ask, though. You are young. Why would you
23 want to step off of the path that appears you're on
24 into from a successful career? You've mentioned
25 three children who would like Daddy to have a little

1 **more upside potential on earning capacity. Why would**
 2 **you do this now instead of waiting sometime later?**

3 A. Short answer is in my blood. We have a family legacy
 4 of service. My granddaddy, Norman, was the Master in
 5 Equity for Berkeley County many, many years ago. He
 6 served in the House. Why I want to do this now is
 7 because I love my community. The first role of a
 8 judge is to be a public servant. Berkeley County is
 9 where I was raised, it's where I was born, it's where
 10 I met my wife, where I married my wife, and where my
 11 kids are being raised. Berkeley County has been good
 12 to me. I want to be good to Berkeley County. The
 13 whole concept of monetary gain, that is not in the
 14 equation. What is in the equation is I want to be a
 15 public servant. I want to help carry my community
 16 into the future.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Representative Caskey.

18 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 EXAMINATION

20 BY REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY:

21 **Q. First, let me just applaud you for what you've done**
 22 **in your career. And as the chairman said, a number**
 23 **of glowing comments in the ballot box survey. And I**
 24 **don't know that there's an answer right now. But if**
 25 **we're to take the suggestion of the one commenter who**

1 said you'd be a great family court judge or circuit
2 court judge one day, or perhaps even now, are you
3 sure that this is the right move for you now, given
4 that, as I understand it, Berkeley County's master's
5 position is going be a full-time gig. It's gonna be
6 hard for you to come back here in 4, 5, 10, 20 years
7 and say that you've had a diverse range of practice
8 experiences that would suit you well for one of those
9 other benches. I know that Judge Van Slambrook has
10 come to the circuit court from master in equity
11 position, but with great respect to deference, he's
12 considerably older and more experienced than you in
13 terms of where you are at the moment of ascension to
14 a bench or, in your case, a potential ascension. Is
15 that strike you as a concern worth thinking about?
16 Or am I just making up problems for people?

17 A. It is not a problem for me. I want to be the master.
18 I want to be the master as long as you'll let me be
19 the master. I'm not looking for any other seat. I'm
20 looking for this seat. This is where I see my
21 future.

22 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Okay, thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Mr. Safran.

24 EXAMINATION

25 BY MR. SAFRAN:

- 1 Q. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk to
2 you a little bit. Let me just kind of, I guess,
3 leapfrog on what I just heard from both the chairman
4 and the vice chairman. You're still relatively young
5 and still in the early stages of your career. And I
6 see and so I'm not going to sit here and tell you you
7 are the exception because, frankly, I've seen a
8 number of people this go around similar to you age
9 wise, who are basically deciding to kind of leave
10 practice and go and do something similar to what
11 you're asking for. I've also been here long enough
12 to see where we've had people come in and say, I want
13 to be this, it's my blood, it's my calling, it's my
14 destiny, and then two years later, there's another
15 seat opening up, and they're showing up over here and
16 somehow the destiny's changed. And I'm not saying
17 that's what's going to happen with you, but you
18 understand it's a big step? I mean, do you
19 understand that maybe at this stage, it's hard to
20 really fathom what's out there for you? That maybe
21 there are other things that may be beneficial to
22 learn down the road? I mean, have you thought about
23 those things?
- 24 A. Beneficial to be learned down the road. There's
25 always benefit to learning down the road. There's

1 always benefit to learning now. I go back to my
2 comment about my kids. You never stop learning to be
3 a good person. Do you let the fear of the future or
4 an opportunity in the future squander an opportunity
5 now? Well, my answer to all that is in two years, I
6 hope to be back right in front of this commission
7 asking to be re-seated on that master's bench.

8 Q. You know, we don't really have anything to do other
9 than screening the master and that's ultimately up to
10 the delegation.

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. And basically, I'm not sitting here saying that
13 there's anything that I see jumping out at me that
14 tells me you're not up to the task. That's not it.
15 But you know, I guess again, I look at Dale Van
16 Slambrook, or now Judge Van Slambrook. I've known
17 him since law school. And I think he brought to the
18 bench, when he came over and became the master, a
19 wealth of experience, which was obviously obtained
20 over the course of 30 plus years. If I have any, you
21 know, bias, I think my bias is I like to have
22 somebody that puts in maybe a little bit more time.
23 And again, you may disagree with me. I guess we all
24 have our honest beliefs about these things. But you
25 know, I look at you as somebody that seemingly is

1 very attached to the community, that has a strong
2 sense of purpose within the realm of Berkeley County.
3 And you know, I just feel like at times, maybe
4 sometimes these things open up and the thought is,
5 well, you know what, I might not get a chance at this
6 again and maybe that weighs in here, maybe it
7 doesn't. But you know, the only thing I just suggest
8 to you is as these things come up, and these chances
9 occur probably more frequently than we might realize.
10 You just don't ever know. And I just want to make
11 sure as Representative Caskey pointed out that, you
12 know, for all the good intentions, sometimes maybe
13 these things are one where we kind of go, wait a
14 minute, maybe there is another side of it. And
15 that's the only thing I'm just suggesting. And I
16 appreciate your response.

17 MR. WEST: I appreciate that comment. That's
18 actually a wise comment. Thank you.

19 REPRESENTATIVE RUTHERFORD: First time. I'm teasing.
20 I'm teasing.

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, unless there are further
22 questions, Mr. West, we want to thank you for
23 offering and again, thank you for your patience
24 with us today. Greetings again to your great
25 father. Well earned great reputation and the

1 line chip off the old block or hopefully in my
2 case chip off the old rock. My father's
3 nickname was Rock Rankin. It is an honor to
4 have a father who is held to such high regard
5 and you were blessed. Your brother is blessed.
6 And our state is blessed with good folk like
7 that, who have chosen public service and
8 continue to serve. So at your young age of 59
9 slash 20 39, I commend you for that. Your
10 willingness to do that. You've never screened
11 before so I need to get your verbal affirmation
12 that we view very seriously the violation either
13 the spirit of the black letter law, the ethics
14 laws itself, any violation by you would be
15 deemed very serious. And you understand that
16 this record is open until the formal release of
17 the record of qualifications. We would call you
18 back in that unlikely event that you would go
19 astray of the ethics laws. You're aware of
20 that, correct?

21 MR. WEST: I understand.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, so that's it. Thank
23 you, the West trio. Blessings to you guys on
24 your trip back and Happy Holidays to you all.

25 MR. WEST: Thank you all.

1 (Off the record)

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Judge, welcome.

3 JUDGE CROSBY: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Welcome back.

5 JUDGE CROSBY: Yes. Pleasure to be here.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Super. Do me a favor. Raise your
7 right hand.

8 JOE CROSBY, having been first duly sworn, was
9 examined and testified as follows:

10 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: You got two statements ready to go
11 into the record without objections?

12 JUDGE CROSBY: Correct.

13 (EXHIBIT NO. 16 MARKED FOR
14 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (15
15 pages) PDQ)

16 (EXHIBIT NO. 17 MARKED FOR
17 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
18 Sworn Statement)

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, Judge, you've been here
20 before. You know this drill. Our focus is on
21 the nine evaluative criteria which includes a
22 ballot box survey, thorough study of your
23 application materials, verification of your
24 compliance with the state ethics laws, search of
25 newspaper articles in which your name appears,

1 past screenings, and check for economic
2 conflicts of interest. No witnesses or
3 complainants are here against you. You didn't
4 bring anybody with you today knowing, perhaps.
5 how inefficient the use of time here may be.
6 We're less than an hour late, though. And so
7 kudos to you for being here early. We
8 appreciate that. And so I'm going to offer you
9 the opportunity to make a closing statement, if
10 you'd like. In the interest of time, we're
11 gonna turn it over Breeden John for questions
12 and the members of the Commission as they may
13 have. Welcome, Judge Crosby.

14 JUDGE CROSBY: Thank you, sir.

15 EXAMINATION

16 MR. JOHN:

17 **Q. Good afternoon, Judge.**

18 A. Good afternoon.

19 **Q. After having served five years as master in**
20 **Georgetown County, why do you wish to continue**
21 **servicing?**

22 A. Well, it's over the past, I believe, since 2007, I
23 believe when I was first appointed, it -- I've grown
24 into the job. I enjoy the job. And also, I believe
25 it provides an opportunity to help folks who are --

1 you know, they're coming in front of the Court
2 generally in my time, it's not because they want to
3 be here so we're able to treat them with compassion
4 and fairness. But at the same time, do what the law
5 requires.

6 **Q. Thank you. And, apologies there, Judge. I have a**
7 **typo here. Didn't mean to sell your service short,**
8 **but I know -- well, what do you think your reputation**
9 **is among lawyers practicing before you?**

10 **A.** I believe I have a reputation for fairness. I treat
11 the litigants and their attorneys fairly,
12 courteously. There are very few times I would
13 require a deputy, but it does happen. But I believe
14 that I run a fair, courteous, and efficient
15 courtroom.

16 **Q. Very good. We received 261 ballot box surveys**
17 **regarding you, 14 additional comments. Vast majority**
18 **were positive. Respondents noted that you are**
19 **knowledgeable and experienced, have excellent,**
20 **excellent judicial temperament and run an excellent**
21 **operation as the master in equity for Georgetown**
22 **County. Likewise, the Pee Dee Citizens Committee**
23 **found you qualified in the areas of constitutional**
24 **qualifications, physical health, and mental**
25 **stability. Well qualified in the areas of ethical**

1 fitness, professional and academic ability,
2 character, reputation, experience, and judicial
3 temperament. Since you submitted your letter of
4 intent, have you contacted any members of the
5 Commission regarding your candidacy?

6 A. I have not.

7 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70, including the
8 limitations on contacting members of the General
9 Assembly?

10 A. Yes, I am.

11 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
12 sought or received the pledge of any legislator?

13 A. I have not sought nor have I received any pledge.

14 Q. Very good. Have you asked any third parties to
15 contact members of the General Assembly on your
16 behalf or are you aware of anyone --

17 A. I have not asked.

18 Q. Have you reviewed -- do you understand the
19 Commission's guidelines on pledging and South
20 Carolina Code Section 2-19-70E?

21 A. I do.

22 Q. Very good. Thank you.

23 MR. JOHN: I would just note for the record that any
24 concerns raised during the investigation were
25 incorporated in the questioning today and have

1 no further questions.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, members of the
3 Commission, any questions? Senator Saab.

4 SENATOR SAAB: Thanks, Chairman. I really don't have
5 any questions. Just a comment. Of course, you
6 know, Georgetown's in my district and I'm very
7 close to a number of the lawyers. And I don't
8 know that there's a master in our state that's
9 as widely respected as Judge Crosby be is. He
10 just enjoys an excellent reputation. Every once
11 in a while, I run into pro se litigants. And
12 believe it or not, we end up having questions
13 about their experience and before the master and
14 when he talks about being fair, courteous and
15 efficient, I think that probably understates how
16 he's viewed. So I just wanted to share with
17 commission my knowledge and experience as it
18 relates to Judge Crosby.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. I want to just
20 highlight the comment about you again,
21 anonymously, aside from great letters of
22 reference that you have. Efficient but humble.
23 And so that just screams to me you are wearing
24 the robe, you're in a position of authority yet
25 you're treating folks fairly, but you're

1 applying the law. And they could have written
2 any number of things. Only one negative comment
3 didn't even speak to you at all. And I think
4 they may have been confused as to who you were.
5 So overwhelming positives. And you are to my
6 eyes and again, reading all that we have in the
7 comments from everybody thus -- thus far,
8 wearing the robe lightly. So kudos to you for
9 doing that. We're going to be very brief. And
10 so I will offer you the opportunity to make a
11 closing statement if you like.

12 JUDGE CROSBY: Certainly, I appreciate the time that
13 y'all take out of your lives to be here and do
14 this because I also believe that this is an
15 important part of the judicial process. So I
16 appreciate the comments. Senators, thank you so
17 much for those. I truly appreciate those. And
18 with that being said, thank you very much.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. So again, brevity is
20 clarity and you have done it so well. I want to
21 remind you that the formal release of the record
22 of qualifications is later and until that point,
23 this record will remain open. As you know, any
24 violation of the letter or the spirit of the
25 ethics law would be deemed very serious by us.

1 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (11
2 pages) PDQ)
3 (EXHIBIT NO. 19 MARKED FOR
4 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
5 Sworn Statement)

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. We'll mark them and you
7 know our process here having done this before.
8 We're focused on the nine evaluative criteria,
9 which includes the ballot box survey, thorough
10 study of your application materials, check for
11 economic conflicts of interest, compliance with
12 the state ethics laws, search of newspaper
13 articles in which your name appears, and past
14 previous screenings. No objections or
15 affidavits have been filed in opposition to your
16 campaign. We're starting at 12:41 instead of
17 12:00. We're going to dispense with your
18 opening statement but give you the brief
19 opportunity to make a closing remarks if you
20 like. But turn it over to Ms. Adler now and
21 then get the questions, if any, from the
22 commission.

23 JUDGE COX: Thank you.

24 MS. ADLER: Good morning, Judge Cox.

25 JUDGE COX: Good morning.

1 MS. ADLER: I note for the record that based on the
2 testimony that's contained in the candidate's
3 PDQ, which has now been included in the record
4 with the candidate's consent, Judge William B.
5 Cox meets the statutory requirements for this
6 position regarding age, residence and years of
7 practice.

EXAMINATION

8
9 MS. ADLER:

10 **Q. Judge Cox, you were first appointed in April of this**
11 **year to fill an unexpired term as the master in**
12 **equity for Kershaw County. How do you feel that**
13 **initial service and your legal and professional**
14 **experience thus far renders you qualified and will**
15 **assist you to continue to be an effective master in**
16 **equity?**

17 **A.** Thank you. I actually started as special referee
18 back almost a year ago now in January, and so I was
19 handling a lot of special referee cases before the
20 legislature voted in April to make that official. So
21 between the special referee cases and then the
22 master's cases that I have been doing since April,
23 and the communications with the -- my other judges in
24 the -- in the master's group, if you will, which is a
25 really wonderful tightknit way to bounce things off

1 each other, I've gained a lot of experience, a lot of
2 different types of cases. I have dedicated office
3 staff that helps me manage my calendars, and I don't
4 -- I think we're all up to date on our required
5 monthly filings and that sort of thing. So I think
6 just the past year in managing this has prepared me
7 to keep going forward for the six.

8 **Q. Thank you. Judge Cox, the Commission received 190**
9 **ballot box survey responses about you with 2**
10 **additional comments, both positive, which I'll share.**
11 **"I've had professional interactions with William Cox**
12 **and found him to be very upstanding and**
13 **knowledgeable." And "Judge Cox is very capable of**
14 **doing his job. He's trained himself and is doing a**
15 **fantastic job. Judge Cox is a joy to work with and**
16 **is eager to make sure everything is handled**
17 **correctly."**

18 MS. ADLER: Mr. Chairman, I'll note that the Midlands
19 Citizens Committee found Judge Cox qualified in
20 the evaluative criteria of constitutional
21 qualifications, physical health, and mental
22 stability. The committee found him well
23 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical
24 fitness, professional and academic ability,
25 character, reputation, experience, and judicial

1 temperament. The committee stated in summary,
2 well qualified, no comment needed.

3 Q. And just a few housekeeping issues. Judge Cox, are
4 you aware that as a judicial candidate, you're bound
5 by the Code of Judicial Conduct as found in Rule 501
6 of the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules?

7 A. Yes, ma'am.

8 Q. Judge Cox, since submitting your letter of intent,
9 have you contacted any members of the Commission
10 about your candidacy?

11 A. I have not.

12 Q. Are you familiar with South Carolina Code Section
13 2-19-70, including the limitations on contacting
14 members of the General Assembly regarding your
15 screening?

16 A. I am.

17 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
18 sought or received the pledge of any legislator
19 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
20 your screening?

21 A. I have not.

22 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
23 of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you
24 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
25 process on your behalf?

1 A. I have not, and I'm not aware.

2 **Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the**
3 **Commission's guidelines on pledging and South**
4 **Carolina Code Section 2-19-70E?**

5 A. Pledging? I'm not specifically familiar with it, but
6 if it's a legislator's pledging votes to me, I've not
7 requested any, and I'm not aware of any.

8 **Q. Thank you.**

9 MS. ADLER: I'll note for the record that any
10 concerns raised during the investigation by
11 staff regarding the candidate were incorporated
12 into the questioning of the candidate today.

13 Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Judge Cox, so far, so
15 good for you? That's a question.

16 JUDGE COX: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I'm settling in
17 very well. I'm learning how to balance my
18 private practice with the demands of the office,
19 and I think things are going very well. My
20 communications and -- well, communications with
21 the county staff, with my clerk of court's
22 office and also the other lawyers that I've come
23 in contact with in the practice have all gone
24 very well, I believe.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Well, and you are -- you've gotten

1 not dinged -- you've not been dinged by any
2 negative comment by anybody. And so, so far,
3 from my view, our view, I would suggest to you
4 so far, so great. And so thank you for your
5 willingness to continue to do this now on a full
6 term.

7 JUDGE COX: Yes, sir.

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And your -- one letter of note.
9 Speaker Sheheen -- Bob Sheheen, I do believe is
10 your partner.

11 JUDGE COX: He is.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And what a wonderful group you work
13 with. And kudos to you. I'm not asking you
14 something, but I want to give the opportunity to
15 say what you're thinking.

16 JUDGE COX: Well, I was just going -- I was just
17 going to mention when Bob -- I remember when he
18 took me to lunch 30 years ago and offered me a
19 job, I thought it was the best thing that ever
20 happened to me in my entire life. And to still
21 have him in my office is just like having a
22 godfather around you and guiding you and working
23 through things. So it's been unbelievable.
24 Best decision I ever made was to accept that job
25 30 years ago.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. Well, thank you for
2 your willingness. Unless there's other
3 questions again, your willingness to continue
4 serving in this capacity and doing the work of
5 the people in a very unique context as masters
6 in equity do.

7 JUDGE COX: Yes, sir.

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: So reminder, as you may recall,
9 this record is not closed until the formal
10 release of the record of qualifications. In the
11 unlikely event that you would go astray at the
12 letter or the spirit of the ethics law, you
13 understand that we would call you back for
14 further questions, correct?

15 JUDGE COX: Understand. I do understand.

16 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, Judge Cox, thank you so
17 much. I don't believe you want to do a closing
18 statement, do you?

19 JUDGE COX: I think I closed last year. I don't want
20 to take up any more of your time. I know that
21 you've got -- like I told the screening
22 commission when they asked if I wanted to come
23 to Columbia for a personal interview or admit --
24 what was it? What was it you asked me to do?
25 It was to update something or come to a personal

1 interview. I said I know you've got plenty of
2 people to interview. I don't need to waste your
3 time. So I won't waste your time more today.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Well, Ms. Crawford said, I bet he
5 doesn't want to make a closing statement. So
6 she was so right.

7 JUDGE COX: Thank you all very much for your time,
8 and I look forward to serving continuously.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Thank you very much. Blessings to
10 you on the holiday upcoming.

11 JUDGE COX: Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Take care. We're going to go to
13 Judge Spence and then we'll break for lunch.

14 (Off the record)

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Welcome, Judge.

16 JUDGE SPENCE: Yes, sir.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Raise your right hand if you will,
18 please.

19 JAMES OTTO SPENCE, having been first duly sworn,
20 was examined and testified as follows:

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Welcome, Judge. You've got two
22 statements, the PDQ and the sworn statement.
23 Are they ready to be entered into the record
24 without objection?

25 JUDGE SPENCE: Yes, sir.

1 (EXHIBIT NO. 20 MARKED FOR
2 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (12
3 pages) PDQ)

4 (EXHIBIT NO. 21 MARKED FOR
5 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)
6 Sworn Statement)

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Thank you for your
8 willingness to be here early, and we're going to
9 reward you with getting out of here well before
10 our appointed time. So again, thank you. Ms.
11 Faulk is going to ask you some questions about
12 your candidacy. You understand our role here,
13 the commission in terms of screening you. We
14 focus on the nine evaluative criteria, which
15 includes a ballot box survey, thorough study of
16 your application materials, confirmation of your
17 compliance with the state ethics law, search of
18 newspaper articles in which your name appears,
19 past screenings, and a check for economic
20 conflicts of interest. No complaint has been
21 filed in opposition to your campaign. We're
22 going to dispense with the opening statement.
23 Be relieved of that. But you will have the
24 opportunity to make any closing comments you'd
25 like following questions of our commission, if

1 A. I think okay. We do a Lexington County bench bar.
2 My dad was a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps.
3 There are four boys in my family. We often went
4 through the process of permission to speak frankly.
5 And so I always talk with attorneys about that, about
6 there's something I need to know, I need to know. I
7 play football, high school and college. I'm used to
8 having people get in my eyes and question my thought
9 capacity. So I don't -- it's all film study. And
10 you want to encourage that to get better. And thank
11 you all for taking the time to do this film study
12 because we got the best legal system in the world
13 because of what y'all do. And I know y'all do a lot
14 of work on this and I thank you all for what y'all
15 do.

16 Q. The Commission received 271 ballot box surveys
17 regarding you with 19 additional comments. The
18 ballot box survey, for example, contained the
19 following positive comments. First, an excellent
20 judge, hardworking, compassionate, honest and fair.
21 Works hard to assure that when people have their day
22 in court, they get the best and professionalism and
23 preparation from everyone involved, including
24 himself. He has been a rock solid jurist for
25 Lexington County for many years, one of the best.

1 Next, Judge Spence is a living library of legal
2 knowledge. Finally, Judge Spence is likely the
3 foremost master in equity in the state currently.
4 His experience and knowledge are vast, and he does an
5 excellent job of analyzing complex matters. His
6 courtroom demeanor is exceptionally professional,
7 even with difficult pro se defendants. Only one of
8 the written comments expressed a concern. Judge, a
9 SLED check found that since your last screening,
10 you've been listed as a defendant in a couple of
11 actions. The first is Riley v. Civil Action Number
12 2014-CP-32-00665. The next is Stack v. Brock and
13 Scott, PLLC and the final is another Stack v. Brock
14 and Scott, PLLC. Respectively, those last two Brock
15 and Scott PLLC cases were filed in June of 2023 and
16 August of 2023. Is there anything that you can tell
17 us about these suits, please, sir?

18 A. Yes, ma'am. All of those cases were foreclosure
19 cases with pro se defendants. And what they do is
20 that a lot of times they name everybody, you'll see a
21 lot of defendants, clerk of courts, judges. All of
22 those are pro ses. They didn't have attorneys. They
23 name a lot of people. When I first became a judge,
24 we talked to court administration about what to do.
25 We don't accept service, we send a copy to our county

1 attorney, and we send it to court administration.
2 And then if necessary, they send it to the Attorney
3 General's office. But all three of those are same
4 type cases. It's Ms. Riley, and then the Stacks are
5 -- it's a husband and a wife. It's Corinthian and
6 something Stack.

7 **Q. Thank you, Judge.**

8 A. Yes, ma'am.

9 MS. FAULK: I would note that the Midland Citizens
10 Committee found Judge Spence well qualified in
11 the evaluative criteria of ethical fitness,
12 professional and academic ability, character,
13 reputation, experience, and judicial
14 temperament. The committee further found Judge
15 Spence qualified in the evaluative criteria of
16 constitutional qualifications, physical health,
17 and mental stability.

18 **Q. Finally, Judge, I just have a couple of housekeeping**
19 **questions and then that'll be it for me. Judge**
20 **Spence, since submitting your letter of intent, have**
21 **you contacted any members of the commission about**
22 **your candidacy?**

23 A. No, ma'am.

24 **Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70, including the**
25 **limitations on contacting members of the General**

1 **Assembly regarding your screening?**

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. **Since submitting your letter of intent, have you**
4 **sought or received the pledge of any legislator**
5 **either prior to this date or pending the outcome of**
6 **your screening?**

7 A. No, ma'am.

8 Q. **Have you asked any third parties to contact members**
9 **of the General Assembly on your behalf or are you**
10 **aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this**
11 **process on your behalf?**

12 A. No, and no, ma'am.

13 Q. **Have you reviewed and do you understand the**
14 **Commission's guidelines on pledging and South**
15 **Carolina Code 2-19-70E?**

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. FALUK: I would note for the record that any
18 concerns raised during the investigation
19 regarding Judge Spence were incorporated into
20 the question of the candidate today. Mr.
21 Chairman, I have no further questions. Thank
22 you, Judge.

23 JUDGE SPENCE: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, members? Representative
25 Caskey.

1 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Judge, good afternoon, sir.

3 JUDGE SPENCE: Good afternoon.

4 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Thank you for what you do.

5 Thank you for offering for continued service. I
6 just really wanted to say that, quite frankly.
7 We don't often do it enough to the individuals
8 who stand out as exceptional jurists or really
9 we should offer to more at large. But your case
10 specifically, you have done so much and I've
11 enjoyed serving on the Access to Justice
12 Commission with you and seeing the phenomenal
13 work that you've done and what you've
14 contributed to the legal community. And lastly,
15 I had to step out very briefly for a moment as
16 Ms. Faulk was going through some of the
17 comments, but to the extent she didn't share
18 some of these with you, I want you to know that
19 it's not just I saying positive things about
20 you. Members of the Bar have said, you know,
21 Judge Spence is a living library of legal
22 knowledge, awesome person and judge, credit to
23 the bench, respect, always fair, respectful,
24 diligent, unflinching sense of fairness. Such an
25 awesome guy. He is kind. And I just really

1 want to say thank you for bringing great credit,
2 not just to yourself, but to the profession and
3 to the bench. So say -- say anything you like
4 or not but I wanted to share that with you, sir.

5 JUDGE SPENCE: Well, thank you very much. In all
6 honesty, whoever said I was a living knowledge,
7 all that stuff, they're being polite, not
8 calling it like it was. I'm a geek judge. I
9 got I got files on everything. So I'm the geek.
10 I like the way they said it better than the way
11 most of the times they refer to me. So that was
12 pleasant.

13 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Fair enough. Thank you,
14 Judge.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Geek Safran. Excuse me, Andy
16 Safran.

17 MR. SAFRAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I remember
18 you. You were you're behind me in law school.
19 And the one thing I remember then, the thing
20 that speaks loudly from these comments is I've
21 always had the impression you've been very
22 humble. You're not a big talker, but basically,
23 you've always wanted to do what was right. You
24 wanted to be fair and that's what these comments
25 say. You know, the most that we can ask for out

1 of a judge is fairness and consistency. And
2 you've been doing that now for years and years.
3 And so I agree, you ought to be very proud of
4 what you've accomplished. I think we're very
5 lucky to have you and just keep doing what
6 you're doing.

7 JUDGE SPENCE: Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Senator Saab.

9 SENATOR SAAB: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to
10 follow suit. And I always kind of look at what
11 lawyers and judges do beyond their jobs. And
12 you know, one of the things I noted about you
13 was your involvement in your church, and being
14 everything from a Sunday school teacher to a
15 greeter. And I really think when folks see us
16 in those kinds of position, it also adds
17 something to our profession. And so just want
18 to thank you for the work you're doing the
19 church.

20 JUDGE SPENCE: Thank you. And I agree.

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Judge, I don't believe we've had so
22 many folks atta boying you or atta judging you
23 as we've had here. But without a doubt, as
24 Representative Caskey has said, I don't know you
25 except through this process, but you are doing

1 great work. And the world is affirming you.
2 One comment you expect out of your litigants,
3 and for everybody, exceptional professionalism,
4 preparedness, and their day in court being
5 granted. And so you are wearing the robe
6 correctly and lightly and in the most exemplary
7 way. So thank you for that.

8 JUDGE SPENCE: Thank you all very much. And again,
9 thanks for what y'all do, because not guaranteed
10 to have the legal system we have now without
11 y'all doing this. So thanks for all the hard
12 work you're doing.

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Judge, I'm going to offer you that
14 closing statement unless you want to rest on
15 that.

16 JUDGE SPENCE: That's it.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. And we will at this
18 time, remind you that the record is not closed
19 until the formal release of the record of
20 qualifications. In the unlikely event you would
21 go astray of the state ethics law in the letter
22 or the spirit thereof, you understand we would
23 call you back for further questions, correct?

24 JUDGE SPENCE: Yes, sir.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Judge, thank you again for being

1 early and now being out early. And so enjoy
2 your 45 minute break or get back to those files
3 --

4 JUDGE SPENCE: Yes, sir.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: -- whichever your preference is.

6 JUDGE SPENCE: Thank y'all very much.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Blessings to you. Thank you. We
8 will now go on motion of Senator Garrett,
9 seconded by Representative Jordan in executive
10 session.

11 EXECUTIVE SESSION WAS HELD FROM 1:01 TO 2:45 PM

12 (Off the record)

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, we are back on the
14 record. And for the record during executive
15 sessions, no votes were cast, no decisions made.
16 We will now proceed to the next candidate. Mr.
17 Saverance, is that --

18 MR. SAVERANCE: That's correct.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Did I pronounce that correctly?
20 Come on up if you will.

21 MR. SAVERANCE: Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: I'm going to have you raise your
23 right hand.

24 JAMES PATTERSON SAVERANCE, having been first
25 duly sworn, was examined and testified as

1 follows:

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. You have before you
3 that PDQ and sworn statement. Are those ready
4 to be entered into the record without objection?

5 MR. SAVERANCE: They're correct. There are no
6 changes.

7 (EXHIBIT NO. 22 MARKED FOR
8 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (16
9 pages) PDQ)

10 (EXHIBIT NO. 23 MARKED FOR
11 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
12 Sworn Statement)

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. And Ms. Putnam will
14 take those and they will be included in the
15 record this time. We appreciate your patience
16 with us. We have moved this calendar around,
17 this schedule around, and we are now on your
18 candidacy for the Master in Equity position.
19 You have never screened before, I believe, is
20 that correct?

21 MR. SAVERANCE: That's correct, never before.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. So let me just tell you
23 for the first time hearing this, we look at the
24 nine evaluative criteria, which includes the
25 ballot box survey, study of your application

1 materials, check for economic conflicts of
2 interest, search of newspaper articles in which
3 your name appears, and confirmation that you've
4 complied with the state ethics law. No
5 complaints have been filed in opposition to your
6 campaign or affidavits. I do note that you have
7 brought someone with you. Please introduce your
8 guest.

9 MR. SAVERANCE: This is my wife, April Saverance, 27
10 years now.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And a bright smile on her face when
12 you said 27 years. Blessings to you, ma'am.
13 Thank you for being here with us. Mr.
14 Saverance, given the interest of time, we're
15 going to dispense with your opportunity for an
16 opening statement. I will extend that to you at
17 the very end. We'll turn it over to Mr. Walpole
18 for questions and then members of the Commission
19 as they may have as well.

20 MR. WALPOLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the
21 Commission.

22 EXAMINATION

23 MR. WALPOLE:

24 **Q. Mr. Saverance, good to see you again.**

25 **A. Good to see you too.**

1 MR. WALPOLE: I note for the record that based on the
2 testimony contained in the candidate's PDQ,
3 which has been included in the record with the
4 candidate's consent, Mr. Saverance meets the
5 statutory requirements for this position
6 regarding age, residence, and years of practice.

7 **Q. Mr. Saverance, how do you feel your legal and**
8 **professional experience thus far renders you**
9 **qualified and will assist you to be an effective**
10 **master and advocate?**

11 A. Well, I've been practicing law since 1999. I've been
12 in private practice since '99. I opened my own
13 private law practice, solo practitioner office, in
14 2006. I've been an assistant solicitor for four
15 years. I've been a public defender for roughly five
16 or six years. I've been on the federal CJA list
17 handling federal criminal appointments in Florence
18 since 2009. I've prosecuted cases for the Lee County
19 Sheriff's Department for CDV charges for a year. I
20 handled cases where I represented DSS, and I don't
21 say prosecute, but handled cases for DSS against, I
22 guess, parties who had children maybe removed for, I
23 believe, two or three years. In private practice,
24 personal injury, slip and falls, family court,
25 probate, wills, trust, estates, things like that.

1 I've had a lot of experience in that. Handled a ton
2 of cases at trial, especially as a solicitor and a
3 public defender when I first, you know, kind of
4 graduated and got my feet wet. But in terms of
5 specific experience for Master in Equity, I mean, I
6 think those things will be helpful for me in trial
7 and settling cases and handling cases. But I have
8 been a special referee a number of times when there
9 have been conflicts with the Master in Equity in Lee
10 County. As special referee, I've handled
11 foreclosures, actions to quiet title, default
12 hearings, damage hearings on nursing home cases, car
13 wrecks, and things like that. I've handled cases in
14 front of Master in Equity in Lee County as a
15 plaintiff's attorney and a defense attorney. So
16 hopefully that wasn't too long-winded. But I think
17 all of those things -- you know, some of those things
18 aren't master in equity, but they're handling cases,
19 they're preparing, they're trying cases, they're
20 having relationships with other attorneys and other
21 persons. So I think all of that stuff kind of would
22 go together to help me. Got a lot to learn, of
23 course, still, but I think a lot of that would go to
24 help me in being a Master in Equity in Lee County.
25 And, of course, I was born and raised there. I live

1 the record, during executive session, no votes
2 were taken, no decisions made. We will now
3 proceed to further questions. Mr. Walpole.

4 MR. WALPOLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would note
5 that the Peedee Citizens Committee found Mr.
6 Saverance qualified in the evaluative criteria
7 of constitutional qualifications, physical
8 health, and mental stability. The committee
9 found him well qualified in the evaluative
10 criteria of ethical fitness, professional and
11 academic ability, character, reputation,
12 experience, and judicial temperament.

13 BY MR. WALPOLE CONTINUED:

14 Q. A few housekeeping issues. Mr. Saverance, are you
15 aware that as a judicial candidate, you are bound by
16 the Code of Judicial Conduct as found in Rule 501 of
17 the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules?

18 A. Yes, I am.

19 Q. Mr. Saverance, since submitting your letter of
20 intent, have you contacted any members of the
21 commission about your candidacy?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70, including the
24 limitations on contacting members of the General
25 Assembly regarding your screening?

1 A. Yes, I'm familiar with it.

2 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
3 sought or received the pledge of any legislator
4 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
5 your screening?

6 A. No, I have not.

7 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
8 of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you
9 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
10 process on your behalf?

11 A. No, I have not.

12 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the
13 commission's guidelines on pledging in South Carolina
14 Code Section 2-19-70E?

15 A. Yes.

16 MR. WALPOLE: Mr. Chairman, I would note for the
17 record that any concerns raised during the
18 investigation by staff regarding the candidate
19 were incorporated into the questioning of the
20 candidate today. Mr. Chairman, I have no
21 further questions.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Thank you, Trey.

23 Questions by Senator or Representative Jordan.

24 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.
25 Saverance, good afternoon. We've known each

1 other a long time. We practiced law down at the
2 interstate from each other. I think we learned
3 practicing in federal court together. I'm sure
4 our clients felt pretty comfortable when I would
5 ask you a question, you would say I don't know
6 and you'd ask me a question and I'd say I don't
7 know.

8 MR. SAVERANCE: That's how it would go, wouldn't it?

9 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Years and years ago. How
10 many roughly ballpark, if you know, how many
11 lawyers are in Lee County? I see you using your
12 hand there.

13 MR. SAVERANCE: Maybe five.

14 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: And I ask that question --

15 MR. SAVERANCE: Maybe seven. Three at one firm, two
16 at -- maybe seven counting me.

17 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: And I ask that question
18 really to make a comment which is we're
19 producing more lawyers, but everybody wants to
20 live in Charleston and Columbia and Greenville.
21 Thank you for stepping up and performing this
22 vital role in rural South Carolina. Far be it
23 from me to call Florence the metropolis down the
24 interstate. But my point is, you know,
25 somebody's got to fill these roles and to have a

1 lawyer with your experience and practice and
2 years of practice, I think, is good to step up
3 and perform this role. So thank you for
4 offering to do it.

5 MR. SAVERANCE: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Other questions? Mr. Saverance, I
7 want to commend you for running. And as you
8 heard questions about and statements about you,
9 you enjoy a great reputation as a member of the
10 bar. And folks obviously believe you're ready
11 to ascend to the bench and put on the robe and
12 start beating out justice instead of advocating.
13 So I wish you well in that. I did offer you an
14 opportunity to make a closing statement, and
15 you're welcome to do that if you want to at this
16 time.

17 MR. SAVERANCE: Okay. Well, we talked about the
18 experience earlier. I would just say that I
19 would see it as a wonderful opportunity to be
20 the Master in Equity, to be able to hear cases
21 and, you know, make decisions based on the law,
22 but also have civility and demeanor toward
23 people, because for some people that's the first
24 time they've been there. Some are pro se, and
25 you don't want people to have a bad taste in

1 their mouth. And I just have good relationships
2 with other attorneys, and I just feel like it
3 would be an honor and a privilege for myself to
4 serve the people in my home county. That's
5 pretty much it.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Well, and one, again, I don't
7 recall if Mr. Walpole mentioned it, but perfect
8 temperament for this position, great guy,
9 ethical, and would be a perfect candidate. So
10 someone's already said it for you. We just
11 don't know who it is, but that is the overall
12 refrain about people commenting about you, in
13 addition to your letters of reference. So with
14 that, we will now close this portion of the
15 screening process. You know that the record is
16 not closed until the final release of the record
17 of qualification, and because of our adherence
18 to both the letter and the spirit of ethics law,
19 any violation by you or the appearance of
20 impropriety, you know that we could call you
21 back in that unlikely event, correct?

22 MR. SAVERANCE: Correct.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. Thank you, and we wish
24 you well and safe travels back to Lee County.
25 Nice having both of you here today.

1 MR. SAVERANCE: Okay.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And we're done.

3 MR. SAVERANCE: Thank you so much.

4 (Off the record)

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, we are going to proceed
6 to a vote now on these races that have preceded
7 these today. And so, Ms. Crawford?

8 MS. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman, the first
9 race that we have not voted on -- I believe
10 we've covered all of those candidates on Monday
11 and Tuesday, the 18th and 19th, so we go to
12 Wednesday, November 20th. The first race is
13 Circuit Court, Ninth Circuit, seat two. I'm
14 going to read those -- I'll list all the
15 candidates first. We have Brian Alfaro,
16 Honorable Russell D. Hilton, Thomas J. Rode, and
17 Bruce Wallace. Remember, each commission member
18 gets three votes.

19 SENATOR SAAB: Mr. Chairman.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Senator Saab.

21 SENATOR SAAB: Mr. Chairman, I'd make a motion that
22 we find all of the candidates qualified.

23 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Second.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made second. All
25 in favor say aye.

1 GROUP: Aye.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition, there being none.

3 All right, now proceed to a vote.

4 MS. CRAWFORD: For those nominating Brian Alfaro,
5 please raise your hand. Alfaro, I'm sorry. The
6 Honorable Russell D. Hilton. Zero. Thomas J.
7 Rode. And R. Bruce Wallace. The next race is
8 for Circuit Court, 16th Circuit, seat two. We
9 have one candidate, Melissa A. Inzerillo.

10 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
11 find the candidate qualified and nominated.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, is there a second?

13 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, all in favor say aye or
15 raise your hand.

16 GROUP: Aye.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition, there being none.

18 MS. CRAWFORD: The next candidate was for re-election
19 to the Family Court, First Circuit, seat one.
20 The Honorable Ann Gue Jones.

21 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
22 find the candidate qualified and nominated.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Second. All right, second. All in
24 favor say aye.

25 GROUP: Aye.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: There being no opposition, all
2 right.

3 MS. CRAWFORD: The next race is Family Court, Second
4 Circuit, seat two, re-election of the Honorable
5 Angela W. Abstance.

6 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the
7 candidate be found qualified and nominated.

8 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, second. All in favor
10 say aye.

11 GROUP: Aye.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition, there being none.

13 MS. CRAWFORD: The next race is for Family Court,
14 Second Circuit, seat one. We have two
15 candidates, Shannon M. Chandler and Amanda
16 Frances Whittle.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Before we go to a motion, put into
18 the record a document dated November 26th from
19 Barb and Company, PA, on Ms. Chandler's file.

20 MS. CRAWFORD: Okay.

21 (EXHIBIT NO. 24 MARKED FOR
22 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (1 pages)
23 Barb and Company)

24 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
25 find both candidates qualified and nominated.

1 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, all in favor of that
3 motion say aye.

4 GROUP: Aye.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

6 MS. CRAWFORD: The next candidate is the Honorable
7 Deadra L. Jefferson, Circuit Court, Ninth
8 Circuit, seat one, re-election.

9 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
10 find the candidate qualified and nominated.

11 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Second. All right, all in favor
13 say aye.

14 GROUP: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

16 MS. CRAWFORD: Moving to Thursday, we have Family
17 Court, Third Circuit, seat one. We have William
18 A. W. Buxton and E. Thompson Kinney.

19 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
20 find both candidates qualified and nominated.

21 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and second.
23 All in favor say aye.

24 GROUP: Aye.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

1 MS. CRAWFORD: The next is the Honorable Coreen B.
2 Khoury, Family Court, Sixth Circuit, seat one,
3 re-election.

4 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
5 find the candidate qualified and nominated.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor of the motion,
7 seconded, say aye.

8 GROUP: Aye.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

10 MS. CRAWFORD: The next is the Honorable Angela J.
11 Moss, Family Court, Seventh Circuit, seat one.

12 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
13 find the candidate qualified and nominated.

14 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and second.
16 All in favor say aye.

17 GROUP: Aye.

18 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

19 MS. CRAWFORD: The next is the Honorable M. Todd
20 Thigpen, Family Court, Seventh Circuit, seat
21 two, re-election.

22 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
23 find the candidate qualified and nominated.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, seconded. All in favor
25 of that motion, seconded, say aye.

1 GROUP: Aye.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: There being no opposition.

3 MS. CRAWFORD: The next race is Family Court, Eighth
4 Circuit, seat one. We have three candidates.
5 The Honorable Brian C. Able, Robert W. Cone, and
6 James Conway "Jim" Todd IV.

7 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
8 find all the candidates qualified and nominated.

9 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and second.

11 All in favor say aye.

12 GROUP: Aye.

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

14 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Joseph C. Smithdeal,
15 Family Court, Eighth Circuit, seat three,
16 re-election.

17 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
18 find the candidate qualified and nominated.

19 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and

21 seconded. All in favor say aye.

22 GROUP: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

24 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Alice Ann Richter,
25 Family Court, Ninth Circuit, seat 2,

1 re-election.

2 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
3 the candidate qualified and nominated.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and
5 seconded. All in favor say aye.

6 GROUP: Aye.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

8 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Blakely Copeland Cahoon,
9 Family Court, Ninth Circuit, seat 4,
10 re-election.

11 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
12 the candidate qualified and nominated.

13 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and
15 seconded. All in favor say aye.

16 GROUP: Aye.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

18 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable David J. Brousseau,
19 Family Court, Tenth Circuit, seat 1,
20 re-election.

21 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
22 the candidate qualified and nominated.

23 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
25 favor say aye.

1 GROUP: Aye.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

3 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable M. Scott McElhannon,
4 Family Court, Tenth Circuit, seat 3,
5 re-election.

6 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
7 the candidate qualified and nominated.

8 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
10 favor say aye.

11 GROUP: Aye.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Ayes have it.

13 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Huntley Smith Crouch,
14 Family Court, Eleventh Circuit, seat 2,
15 re-election.

16 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
17 the candidate qualified and nominated.

18 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor of motion and seconded
20 say aye.

21 GROUP: Aye.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

23 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Michelle M. Hurley,
24 Family Court, Fifth Circuit, seat 2,
25 re-election.

1 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
2 the candidate qualified and nominated.

3 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

5 GROUP: Aye.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: There being no opposition.

7 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable M. Scott Rankin, Family
8 Court, Fifth Circuit, seat 3, re-election.

9 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
10 the candidate qualified and nominated.

11 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor of motion and second,
13 say aye.

14 GROUP: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

16 MS. CRAWFORD: Okay, on Monday, November 25th, for
17 Circuit Court at Large, seat 7, we have six
18 candidates. Let me read through them first.

19 The Honorable Joshua C. B. Allen, De Grant
20 Gibbons, Riley J. Maxwell, Vic Meetze, Jane
21 Merrill.

22 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, the balance of
23 the roster of candidates, I would move that we
24 find them all qualified.

25 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
2 favor say aye.

3 GROUP: Aye.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, any opposition? There
5 being none.

6 MS. CRAWFORD: Okay, proceed to a vote. That means
7 we have five candidates. The Honorable Joshua
8 C. B. Allen, Grant Gibbons, Riley J. Maxwell,
9 Vic Meetze, Jane H. Merrill. So the three
10 candidates qualified and nominated are Grant
11 Gibbons, Vick Meetze, and Jane Merrill. The
12 next race is the Honorable Angela R. Taylor,
13 Family Court, Third Circuit, seat 2,
14 re-election.

15 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
16 the candidate qualified and nominated.

17 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

18 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
19 favor say aye.

20 GROUP: Aye.

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none,
22 so ordered.

23 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Ernie Joseph Jarrett,
24 Family Court, Third Circuit, seat 3,
25 re-election.

1 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
2 the candidate qualified and nominated.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Second. All in favor say aye.

4 GROUP: Aye.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: There being no opposition, so
6 ordered.

7 MS. CRAWFORD: C. Heath Ruffner, Family Court, Fourth
8 Circuit, seat 2.

9 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
10 the candidate qualified and nominated.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor of motion made and
12 seconded, say aye.

13 GROUP: Aye.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: There being no opposition, so
15 ordered.

16 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Rochelle Yarborough
17 Conits, Family Court, Thirteenth Circuit, seat
18 1, re-election.

19 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
20 the candidate qualified and nominated.

21 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
23 favor say aye.

24 GROUP: Aye.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Ayes have it.

1 MS. CRAWFORD: Moving to Tuesday, November 26, 2024.
2 The Honorable Robert E. Newton, Family Court,
3 Eleventh Circuit, seat 3, re-election.

4 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
5 the candidate qualified and nominated.

6 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

8 GROUP: Aye.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none,
10 so ordered.

11 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Alicia Allsbrook
12 Richardson, Family Court, Twelfth Circuit, seat
13 1, re-election.

14 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
15 the candidate qualified and nominated.

16 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Seconded, all in favor say aye.

18 GROUP: Aye.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Ayes have it.

20 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Fitzlee McEachin, Family
21 Court, Twelfth Circuit, seat 2, re-election.

22 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
23 the candidate qualified and nominated.

24 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

1 GROUP: Aye.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

3 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable W. Marsh Robertson,
4 Family Court, Thirteenth Circuit, seat 2,
5 re-election.

6 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
7 the candidate qualified and nominated.

8 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

10 GROUP: Aye.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposition? There being none.

12 MS. CRAWFORD: The next race is Family Court, 13th
13 Circuit, seat 6. We had two candidates,
14 Jonathan D. Hammond and Marcelo Torricos.

15 REPRESENTATIVE RUTHERFORD: Mr. Chairman, I move that
16 both candidates be reported and qualified and
17 nominated.

18 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, motion made and
20 seconded. All in favor say aye.

21 GROUP: Aye.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: There being no opposition.

23 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Gerald C. Smoak Jr.,
24 Family Court, 14th Circuit, seat 1, re-election.

25 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find

1 the candidate qualified and nominated.

2 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
4 favor say aye.

5 GROUP: Aye.

6 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable David G. Guyton, Family
7 Court, 16th Circuit, seat 2, re-election.

8 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
9 the candidate qualified and nominated.

10 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
12 favor say aye.

13 GROUP: Aye.

14 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Kamika "Kim" Nichols-
15 Graham, Family Court, at-large, seat 1,
16 re-election.

17 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
18 the candidate qualified and nominated.

19 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

21 GROUP: Aye.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

23 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Timothy E. Madden,
24 Family Court, at-large, seat 2, re-election.

25 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find

1 the candidate qualified and nominated.

2 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

4 GROUP: Aye.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

6 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable James G. McGee III,
7 Family Court, at-large, seat 3, re-election.

8 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
9 the candidate qualified and nominated.

10 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

12 GROUP: Aye.

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

14 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Randall E. McGee, Family
15 Court, at-large, seat 5, re-election.

16 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
17 the candidate qualified and nominated.

18 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

20 GROUP: Aye.

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

22 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable David Earl Phillips,
23 Family Court, at-large, seat 6, re-election.

24 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
25 the candidate qualified and nominated.

1 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All in favor say aye.

3 GROUP: Aye.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

5 MS. CRAWFORD: The next race is Administrative Law
6 Court, seat 2. There were three candidates,
7 Kristian Cross, the Honorable Brian S. Jeffries,
8 and Samuel L. Johnson.

9 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
10 all the candidates qualified and nominated.

11 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. Motion made and seconded.
13 All in favor say aye.

14 GROUP: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

16 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Jan B. Brommell Holmes,
17 Family Court, 15th Circuit, seat 1, re-election.

18 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
19 the candidate qualified and nominated.

20 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
22 favor say aye.

23 GROUP: Aye.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

25 MS. CRAWFORD: Today we've done the Honorable Robert

1 L. Reibold, Administrative Law Court, seat 3,
2 re-election.

3 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
4 the candidate qualified and nominated.

5 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
7 favor say aye.

8 GROUP: Aye.

9 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

10 MS. CRAWFORD: For Masters in Equity, we just find
11 them qualified. So we have the first Master in
12 Equity would be the Honorable Roy R. Hemphill,
13 Master in Equity, Abbeville County.

14 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
15 the candidate qualified.

16 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
17 favor say aye.

18 GROUP: Aye.

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

20 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable M. Anderson Griffith,
21 Master in Equity, Aiken County.

22 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
23 the candidate qualified.

24 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in

1 favor say aye.

2 GROUP: Aye.

3 MS. CRAWFORD: James J. Wegmann, Master in Equity,
4 Beaufort.

5 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
6 the candidate qualified.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
8 favor say aye.

9 GROUP: Aye.

10 MS. CRAWFORD: For Master in Equity, Berkeley County,
11 we have two candidates. We have W.T., or Tommy,
12 Geddings, Junior and J. --

13 SENATOR SABB: I would make a motion to pass over
14 that particular seat and come back to it.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay.

16 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right.

18 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable Joe M. Crosby, Master in
19 Equity, Georgetown County. Re-election.

20 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
21 the candidate qualified.

22 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
24 favor say aye.

25 GROUP: Aye.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

2 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable William B. Cox, Jr.,
3 Master in Equity, Kershaw County, re-election.

4 REPRESENTATIVE RUTHERFORD: Mr. Chairman, I make a
5 motion we find the candidate qualified.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Second. Motion made and seconded.
7 All in favor say aye.

8 GROUP: Aye.

9 MS. CRAWFORD: Master in Equity for Lee County, James
10 Patterson Saverance.

11 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
12 the candidate qualified.

13 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
15 favor say aye.

16 GROUP: Aye.

17 MS. CRAWFORD: The Honorable James Otto Spence,
18 Master in Equity, Lexington County, re-election.

19 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move we find
20 the candidate qualified.

21 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
23 favor say aye.

24 GROUP: Aye.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: The ayes have it.

1 MS. CRAWFORD: And that's all we have as of now
2 besides Berkeley's seat and the race --

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Let me take this opportunity as we
4 wait on our next candidate. Micah, before we
5 proceed to the last few candidates, I want to
6 get everyone's attention here. Ms. Blackley,
7 Mr. Jordan, all of us. We are about to be at
8 the end of the line, the end of the road here as
9 we know it. I think the song goes. And I just
10 want to commend each of you, newly appointed or
11 long time appointed in terms of our work over
12 the last few years as we have been a part of the
13 vetting process here. I have likened this to
14 buying a car. And we're part of the tire
15 kicking crew that has tried to figure out
16 whether folks who offer for candidacy and make
17 it to this point should be recommended to the
18 full General Assembly for their consideration.
19 And before we break up, I just want to tell you
20 a heartfelt thank you to my long time Senate
21 mate, my new time Senate mate who has jumped in
22 with great zeal. Senator Garrett, you have
23 taken this seriously and you appreciate now or
24 have a different vantage point of what all of us
25 have been doing for the longest time. And many

1 of us, Pete Strom, this is your second gig,
2 second term at this. Lucy Grey McIver, thank
3 you very much. You have brought an incredible,
4 unique focus to this. Truly a credit to this
5 vetting process. Hope Blackley, similar from a
6 different vantage point from a lay position
7 both, but as a lawyer one, but as a clerk of
8 court another to really tell us how this works
9 and how folks interact with the court system
10 from a different vantage point. Todd, a very
11 quiet fellow. Just so glad that he was able to
12 join us. And I won't offer superlatives at this
13 time, but if I could, it would be not the
14 Tasmanian devil. It would be the Toddmanian
15 devil with the zeal that he brings to this.
16 Micah Caskey, again, relatively new but seasoned
17 at this. A true pleasure to work with you up
18 here and to get your sense of humor. I consider
19 myself nearly brilliant to have gotten that, or
20 perhaps something else, as Todd would say. We
21 won't go there. Andy Safran, maybe the longest.
22 I don't know by dates here, but in terms of your
23 view of this and the intensity that you bring to
24 this, incredible, truly incredible. Jay Jordan,
25 new but seasoned at this as well. You have

1 grayed dramatically since we started spending
2 time together here. And so to each of you, I
3 just want to tell you on behalf of my little
4 role here and my little lane, I cannot think of
5 a better crew that I would want to go somewhere
6 on a trip with, as long as we've got a handful
7 of standard bearers leading us along the way,
8 depending on what path we've taken collectively.
9 It has truly been a blessing, the most unique
10 experience ever. In Key Club in high school, or
11 in college, or in law school, who would have
12 ever think that we'd be getting to do what we
13 have been chosen and appointed and anointed, I
14 would say, truly in a spiritual way to do this
15 part of the work. And so kudos to each of
16 y'all. We have spent a lot of time together,
17 and it's all on tape, and it's all on the
18 record, and I couldn't thank you all enough. So
19 with that, my hat's off to y'all. Lastly, but
20 not least, to Erin, to our senior staff, our
21 young staff, House and Senate, we've heard
22 candidates talk about their interaction with,
23 their appreciation for your role in this as
24 well. And so to each of you, Lindi is hiding
25 behind the column, is she, or is she at the

1 door? But to each one of you, this doesn't
2 happen without a lot of energy, a lot of
3 intensity, a lot of good faith effort. And so
4 to you all, I will say, God bless you, and I
5 thank you so much. Representative Caskey.

6 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, if I might add,
7 I think I'd be remiss if I didn't extend on
8 behalf of the Commission our thanks and
9 appreciation to you, not only for finding words
10 today to share with us, as is not often the
11 case, but to nonetheless appreciate your many
12 years of guidance on this commission and holding
13 us to a high standard in the way that we conduct
14 the inquiries and tire kicking, as it were. I'm
15 only disappointed that of all the loud voices
16 that I've heard over the last 18 months about
17 the need for changes to this system, I think
18 we've seen perhaps two at most who've attended.
19 And I don't have the download numbers yet from
20 ETV, but I look forward to seeing those. I'm
21 sure it will be in demand. And that is a
22 testament to your leadership, sir. And I thank
23 you for it. And at the risk of stealing anyone
24 else's thunder, I just want to say thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Super, super, super. All right,

1 Senator Garrett.

2 SENATOR GARRETT: Can I be heard? Thank you. I just
3 want to thank you for this opportunity. For me,
4 it's just a tremendous opportunity. I had no
5 clue. I had no clue as a sitting member of the
6 Senate how much -- how much work and how caring
7 and how the vetting actually takes place. And
8 all the staff out here, you guys have worked
9 yourselves -- listen, I can't even imagine how
10 many hours you all have spent trying to help
11 give us the information that we need. There was
12 very seldom a time that we had a question that
13 you couldn't answer for us. And, again, it's
14 through your leadership and this wealth of
15 knowledge. I just thank you for the
16 opportunity. For me as a senator, I can tell
17 you I'm going to go back and talk to my Senate
18 friends and explain to them that this is one of
19 the most important phases of the judicial
20 process period, because if we hadn't vetted
21 these folks, we're responsible for who we put on
22 the bench. And it's imperative that we have
23 good people. And the only way to do it, and the
24 reason we have good judges, is what I've seen
25 here. And I thank you all for that. Thank you

1 for letting me be a part of it. Thank you, Mr.
2 Chairman.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very good. Representative
4 Rutherford.

5 REPRESENTATIVE RUTHERFORD: It is my tenth year here.
6 And, as such, I just want to echo the comments
7 that have already been made. Before I got on
8 the Commission, I had visited maybe twice. But
9 being on this Commission is one of the honors of
10 a lifetime. And not just to be able to be in the
11 room, but to be in the room with such qualified,
12 great people. The staff who start this back in
13 February, just figuring out the schedule, going
14 to, receiving all the information. And the
15 people on the outside of the room, as already
16 been noted, that don't have a clue what we do,
17 but felt like it was evil, who never bothered to
18 come and sit in here one time and watch and see
19 what it is that we actually did. I, for one,
20 voted against the JMISC bill. I think that the
21 changes are going to be awful. And I think that
22 we are a lesson for every state as to how they
23 should choose judges, how the federal system
24 should choose judges. And the senator now knows
25 we don't talk about politics. We were never

1 interested in anybody's party affiliation, how
2 they voted, who they donated to, or who their
3 friends were. We have elected judges who didn't
4 know a single soul, but were simply good
5 lawyers. And we have come up, and we have done
6 our job. And for that, I am forever grateful to
7 be a part of this process. So thank you all.
8 Thank the staff. Thank everybody involved,
9 including past members who donated hours, days,
10 months of their time to do this. So thank you
11 all.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very good. Senator Saab.

13 SENATOR SAAB: Thanks, Chairman. And real brief, and
14 I won't travel the road that some of you
15 traveled. Let me take it from a different
16 perspective, because one of the things in the
17 debate about the changes that I drew a red line
18 on was the idea of some of us not being able to
19 hold over. Because I think that the
20 institutional knowledge, how we've tried to be
21 consistent, is embodied in those persons that
22 have been around. And I think that you,
23 Representative Caskey, Senator Garrett, you all
24 have an incredible responsibility. And I'm so
25 glad that Billy was able to join us when he did,

1 because he's gotten a sense of how we operate
2 and I think he will be able to carry that forth.
3 I would like to see as much as can go forward in
4 terms of how we've attempted to carry out our
5 duties, be a part of how this body continues to
6 deliberate. And I would echo the sentiments of
7 Todd. It has been an honor of a lifetime to
8 serve, and I thank you for that opportunity.
9 And I'll say this. Although, Representative
10 Rutherford, to be absolutely correct, but I
11 believe that the legislation will maintain a lot
12 of what we have. It changes, but a lot is
13 preserved. And so I walk away believing that
14 the institution is still on sound footing. And
15 Lord knows that's what we need in terms of our
16 judiciary. And so it's just been a great honor
17 to have served with everybody who's a part of
18 this process. And, of course, Mr. Chairman, I
19 owe it all to you. So thank you so much.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And to our court reporter, would we
21 like to have a quick break before we finish our
22 day, or would we like to proceed to our next
23 candidate? Thank you, all right. Ms. Blackley,
24 I'm sorry.

25 MS. BLACKLEY: I remember the day I got the call from

1 Senator Peeler asking if I would be interested
2 in having this appointment and I told him no. I
3 did not want to do this. And we had some more
4 conversations and then I got a full
5 understanding of what this was about and I was
6 floored. Like why would anybody think that I
7 would be qualified to serve on such an esteemed
8 committee and commission. And it has been an
9 opportunity of a lifetime, like you said, Todd,
10 and Senator Saab. And I have learned something
11 from everybody on this commission. And I'm very
12 proud to say that I've served with all of you,
13 all of you. Our newbie here. You know, I
14 often had a lot of pushback from my daughter
15 throughout my career, not spending a lot of time
16 at home. But when she asked me about this and I
17 got to tell her exactly what I do when I come
18 down here, I think that was probably the first
19 time when I felt that she was actually really
20 proud of me. And I will miss you all. And when
21 I don't feel good, I cry. So this is where this
22 is coming from. I lifted my Christmas tree and
23 hurt my back and so I'm in pain, and my blood
24 pressure is pretty high. So I'm going to leave.
25 But I want to thank you, Erin and the staff and

1 everyone, for being so kind to me. As the
2 non-attorney and non-legislator, even though I
3 tried to become a legislator, it didn't work out
4 this time. Maybe another time if I decide to do
5 it. But I have been tremendously blessed by
6 each and every one of you. And I hope we can
7 stay in contact. And thank you for letting us
8 do the picture because I did ask if we could
9 have a picture because I wanted to have it put
10 in my office. And I wish you all the very best
11 and happy holidays. And if there's anything I
12 can ever do for any of you all, I got your back.
13 You all take care. But I'm going to go to the
14 doctor right now.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very good. All right. All right,
16 thank you all very much. And now we will
17 proceed to our next candidate. All right. If
18 you will, please, if you will raise your right
19 hand.

20 STEPHANIE LAWRENCE, having been first duly
21 sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: State your full name for the
23 record, please.

24 MS. LAWRENCE: Stephanie Lawrence.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. You have two documents.

1 Are they ready to be introduced into the record
2 without objection?

3 MS. LAWRENCE: Yes.

4 (EXHIBIT NO. 25 MARKED FOR
5 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (17
6 pages) PDQ)

7 (EXHIBIT NO. 26 MARKED FOR
8 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)
9 Sworn Statement)

10 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: No objection? All right. You are
11 familiar with this process. You understand that
12 our role as we vet your candidacy for the Master
13 in Equity involves the nine evaluative criteria,
14 which includes the ballot box survey, thorough
15 study of your application materials,
16 verification of your compliance with the state
17 ethics laws, search of newspaper articles in
18 which your name appears, past screenings, and
19 confirmation of no economic conflicts of
20 interest. No complaints have been filed in
21 opposition to your campaign. No affidavits have
22 been offered in opposition. In the interest of
23 time, we're going to turn it over to Ms.
24 Chappell for questions, and then perhaps members
25 of the commission may have some questions. Then

1 I'll offer you an opportunity for a closing
2 statement.

3 MS. LAWRENCE: Okay. Thank you, Senator.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Thank you. Make sure that mic --
5 pull that mic a little bit closer to you, if you
6 will. Great.

7 MS. LAWRENCE: Is that better?

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Perfect. Thank you.

9 MS. CHAPPELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I note for
10 the record that based on the testimony contained
11 in the candidate's PDQ, which has been included
12 in the record with the candidate's consent, Ms.
13 Lawrence meets the statutory requirements for
14 this position regarding age, residence, and
15 years of practice.

16 EXAMINATION

17 MS. CHAPPELL:

18 **Q. Ms. Lawrence, why do you want to be Master in Equity?**

19 A. Well, I want to be a judge because of the tremendous
20 amount of respect that I have for our judicial system
21 and the role that it plays in the lives of everyday
22 citizens. So I want to serve my state and my local
23 community, which is Richland County.

24 **Q. How do you feel your legal and professional**
25 **experience thus far renders you qualified and will**

1 **assist you to be an effective Master in Equity?**

2 A. I think my collective experience renders me
3 qualified. I started off practicing, representing
4 public school districts, higher ed institutions, and
5 small municipalities all across the state. In that
6 role, I served in a lot of different capacities for
7 those entities. You're general counsel when you
8 serve those entities and you assist them with
9 litigation, with everything that comes in the door
10 from torts to contracts to personal liability claims,
11 it's whatever happens. I transitioned and went to
12 workers' compensation defense where I represented
13 employers and insurance providers, third-party
14 administrators at every level of the workers'
15 compensation claims, and that gave me a lot of
16 courtroom experience. I spent a lot of time in
17 hearings and trials before our Commission. Right
18 about the time I thought I wanted to become a judge,
19 I stopped private practice and went to contract with
20 the South Carolina Department of Education as an
21 attorney hearing officer to try on the role to make
22 sure it would be a good fit before I sought judicial
23 election. In that capacity, I presided over teacher
24 unprofessional conduct cases for the Department of
25 Education. Those were full evidentiary hearings

1 guided by South Carolina Rules of Evidence, South
2 Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure. I found that it
3 was a good fit, and unfortunately COVID impacted some
4 of that, so my time was cut a little bit short. And
5 then I transitioned to South Carolina School Boards
6 Association where I served as general counsel for the
7 association and the insurance trust. So I think
8 collectively all of that experience over the course
9 of 18 years renders me ready to serve as a judge.

10 **Q. Thank you. Ms. Lawrence, the commission received 178**
11 **ballot box surveys regarding you with 23 additional**
12 **comments. The ballot box survey, for example,**
13 **contained the following positive comments. "Ethical,**
14 **honorable, personable, lots of legal experience in**
15 **many different areas of the law. She would be a**
16 **great addition to the bench." Another said, "Very**
17 **patient and kind, wonderful judicial temperament." A**
18 **few of the written comments expressed concerns about**
19 **your experience, particularly in the area of property**
20 **law. What response would you offer to this concern?**

21 **A. Well, it's true. I don't have as much experience in**
22 **property law as I have in some of the other areas. I**
23 **recognize that there is a learning curve. It's not**
24 **something I'm avoiding. I plan to embrace it like**
25 **I've done throughout my entire practice. You know,**

1 when you learn a new area of law, you put your head
2 down, you do your research, you put the effort in,
3 the training in, and I've already started doing that.
4 I've been attending our CLEs for Master in Equity for
5 the state of South Carolina. I've been observing
6 Judge Strickland, who's our current Richland County
7 Master in Equity. I've kind of been stalking his
8 court, and he's been gracious and kind and allowed me
9 to sit in on lots of hearings and kind enough to
10 answer any questions that I have, you know, at the
11 end of the session. And so I've started the training
12 on my own, kind of curated my own training, because I
13 recognize there is a learning curve. But anyone who
14 goes in behind him, he's been doing it for 35 years,
15 will have some level of learning curve. And I'll
16 handle it like I've always done throughout my
17 practice.

18 **Q. Ms. Lawrence, a search of your name in the background**
19 **check revealed four claim and delivery actions. Two**
20 **were captioned People's Finance Company v. Stephanie**
21 **Lawrence, both filed in 2015. One was captioned**
22 **World Finance Company v. Stephanie Lawrence, filed in**
23 **2015. The last was captioned Regional Finance v.**
24 **Stephanie Lawrence and was filed in 2014. You**
25 **previously testified regarding these actions, but for**

1 **the record today, were these actions filed against**
2 **you?**

3 A. No. There are three Stephanie Lawrences in Columbia,
4 so not me.

5 MS. CHAPPELL: I would note that the Midlands Citizen
6 Committee found Ms. Lawrence qualified in the
7 evaluative criteria of constitutional
8 qualifications, physical health, and mental
9 stability. The committee found her well
10 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical
11 fitness, professional and academic ability,
12 character, reputation, experience, and judicial
13 temperament. The committee stated in summary,
14 "impressive candidate, well qualified."

15 **Q. I just have a few housekeeping issues and then I'll**
16 **be finished with my portion. Ms. Lawrence, are you**
17 **aware that as a judicial candidate, you are bound by**
18 **the Code of Judicial Conduct as found in Rule 501 of**
19 **the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules?**

20 A. I am.

21 **Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you**
22 **contacted any members of the Commission about your**
23 **candidacy?**

24 A. No.

25 **Q. Are you familiar with South Carolina Code Section**

1 2-19-70, including the limitations on contacting
2 members of the General Assembly regarding your
3 screening?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
6 sought or received the pledge of any legislator
7 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
8 your screening?

9 A. I have not.

10 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
11 of the General Assembly on your behalf or are you
12 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
13 process on your behalf?

14 A. I have not and I'm not aware of anyone.

15 Q. Have you reviewed and do you understand the
16 commission's guidelines on pledging and South
17 Carolina Code Section 2-19-70E?

18 A. I do.

19 MS. CHAPPELL: Mr. Chairman, I would note for the
20 record that any concerns raised during the
21 investigation by staff regarding the candidate
22 were incorporated into the questioning of the
23 candidate today. I have no further questions.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Questions by members of
25 the commission? Ms. Lawrence, I want to

1 apologize to you for the late start and your
2 patience in waiting us out, so thank you very
3 much for that. If there are no other questions
4 at this time, I want to remind you, as you know,
5 the record does remain open until the formal
6 release of the record of qualifications. In the
7 event of violation by the state ethics law,
8 either in spirit or the letter, you understand
9 that we would have the right to call you back in
10 that unlikely event, correct?

11 MS. LAWRENCE: I understand.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. Thank you. Again, I
13 appreciate your patience and willingness to
14 offer to serve the folks here in Richland
15 County.

16 MS. LAWRENCE: Thank you all for your time and for
17 your service to our state.

18 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Take care.

19 (Off the record)

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Mr. McVey, come on up. Raise your
21 right hand if you will.

22 IAN MCVEY, having been first duly sworn, was
23 examined and testified as follows:

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Thank you. You've got two
25 documents. Are those ready to be entered into

1 the record?

2 MR. MCVEY: They are.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. No objection by you?

4 MR. MCVEY: That's correct.

5 (EXHIBIT NO. 27 MARKED FOR
6 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (17
7 pages) PDQ)

8 (EXHIBIT NO. 28 MARKED FOR
9 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
10 Sworn Statement)

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: We thank you for your patience with
12 us. We were greatly delayed in getting to this
13 section, but you -- I have sworn you.

14 MR. MCVEY: Yes, sir.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: I know your name.

16 MR. MCVEY: Yes, sir.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And I think you've got a guest with
18 you.

19 MR. MCVEY: I do.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Would you like to introduce your
21 guest?

22 MR. MCVEY: Yes. This is my wife, Theile McVey, is
23 here with me today.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: What does she do?

25 MR. MCVEY: She's an attorney.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Where?

2 MR. MCVEY: Kassel McVey.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: What part of the state is that?

4 MR. MCVEY: Right here in Columbia.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Ah, very well. All right, Mr.

6 McVey, we are going to dispense with any other
7 introductions and going to turn it over to Ms.
8 Baker. Given this late hour, I apologize again
9 for the delay.

10 MR. MCVEY: No worries.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And then we may have questions of
12 the commission. I'll offer you at the end an
13 opportunity for a closing statement. Thank you.

14 MR. MCVEY: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Ms. Baker.

16 MS. BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I note for the
17 record that based on the testimony contained in
18 the candidate's PDQ, which has been included in
19 the record with the candidate's consent, Ian
20 McVey meets the statutory requirements for this
21 position regarding age, residence, and years of
22 practice.

23 EXAMINATION

24 MS. BAKER:

25 Q. Mr. McVey, how do you feel your legal and

1 professional experience thus far renders you
2 qualified and will assist you to be an effective
3 master in equity?

4 A. As I mentioned in my PDQ, I've practiced before just
5 about every master in this state. Now, some of them
6 have retired or unfortunately passed away since I
7 started doing this, but I think I can safely say I've
8 appeared in just about every Master's courtroom in
9 the state. I have spent the majority of my career
10 handling real estate matters, whether they be
11 transactional matters, real estate litigation
12 matters, banking type matters, debt collections,
13 receiverships, mechanics liens, you name it. I've
14 probably spent more time in the Master's courtroom
15 than I have in any other courtrooms in the state.

16 Q. Thank you. Mr. McVey, the Commission received 288
17 ballot box surveys regarding you with 47 additional
18 comments. The ballot box survey, for example,
19 contained the following positive comments: He would
20 serve competently and honorably. Ian McVey is well
21 qualified by temperament, intellect, and experience
22 and would be a credit to the bench. There were no
23 negative comments regarding your candidacy. Mr.
24 McVey, your SLED report indicated that you were named
25 a trustee in 24 cases in the U.S. District Court

1 **between the years 2009 and 2011. All of these**
2 **matters have since closed. Can you please explain to**
3 **the commission the nature of your involvement in**
4 **those suits?**

5 A. William Gary White was suspended by the Supreme Court
6 and I was brought in -- this is before they had Peyre
7 Lumpkin to do this. I was brought in to safeguard
8 the interests of his clients. The only way the
9 federal court lists you is they list you as a
10 trustee, though I would certainly argue you're not
11 really a trustee. But my job at that time was to get
12 the cases over to other people for them to handle.
13 That's actually the only time I ever appeared in
14 front of Judge Perry and it was still terrifying at
15 the time.

16 **Q. Thank you, Mr. McVey.**

17 MS. BAKER: I would note that the Midlands Citizens
18 Committee found Ian McVey qualified in the
19 evaluative criteria of constitutional
20 qualifications, physical health, and mental
21 stability. The committee found him well
22 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical
23 fitness, professional and academic ability,
24 character, reputation, experience, and judicial
25 temperament. The committee stated in summary,

1 well qualified, no comment needed.

2 Q. Mr. McVey, I have a few housekeeping questions for
3 you.

4 A. Sure.

5 Q. Are you aware that as a judicial candidate you are
6 bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct as found in
7 Rule 501 of the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules?

8 A. I am.

9 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
10 contacted any members of the Commission about your
11 candidacy?

12 A. I have not.

13 Q. Are you familiar with Section 2-19-70, including the
14 limitations on contacting members of the General
15 Assembly regarding your screening?

16 A. I am.

17 Q. Since submitting your letter of intent, have you
18 sought or received the pledge of any legislator
19 either prior to this date or pending the outcome of
20 your screening?

21 A. I have not.

22 Q. Have you asked any third parties to contact members
23 of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you
24 aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this
25 process on your behalf?

1 A. I am not.

2 **Q. Have you received -- have you reviewed, and do you**
3 **understand the commission's guidelines on pledging in**
4 **South Carolina Code Section 2-19-70, subsection E?**

5 A. I do.

6 MS. BAKER: Mr. Chairman, I would note for the record
7 that any concerns raised during the
8 investigation by staff regarding the candidate
9 were incorporated into the questioning of the
10 candidate today. Mr. Chairman, I have no
11 further questions.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Questions by members of
13 the Commission? Mr. McVey, thank you very much.
14 And a lack of questions does not mean a lack of
15 interest in your candidacy, I'll assure you.
16 Again, our apologies for the late start here.
17 But I now will offer you the opportunity to make
18 any closing remarks you'd like before we close
19 this portion of the record.

20 MR. MCVEY: I just thank all of you very much for
21 giving me the opportunity to present myself to
22 you today and knowing that I'm the last thing
23 between -- well, maybe the second to last thing
24 between you all in breaking, I very much
25 appreciate your time.

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. Thank you. And one
2 more thing for the record on our end. This
3 closes this portion of the screening. You know
4 that we would take any violation by you of the
5 letter or spirit of the ethics law very
6 seriously. In that unlikely event, you do
7 understand that the record is not closed until
8 the formal release of the record of
9 qualifications and we could call you back.
10 You're aware of that, correct?

11 MR. MCVEY: I am.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. Thank you --

13 MR. MCVEY: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: -- both for being here. So nice to
15 meet Ms. McVey.

16 MR. MCVEY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Take care.

18 (Off the record)

19 JUDGE HOCKER: Good afternoon.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Good afternoon, sir. If you will,
21 Judge, you know how this process works.

22 JUDGE HOCKER: Yes, sir.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Raise your right hand.

24 DONALD HOCKER, having been first duly sworn, was
25 examined and testified as follows:

1 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: State your name for the record,
2 please.

3 JUDGE HOCKER: Donald B. Hocker.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Welcome back, sir.

5 JUDGE HOCKER: Thank you, Senator.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And we are glad to have you. Two
7 statements, the PDQ and the sworn statement.
8 Are they ready to be put into the record?

9 JUDGE HOCKER: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: No objection by you?

11 JUDGE HOCKER: No.

12 (EXHIBIT NO. 29 MARKED FOR
13 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
14 PDQ)

15 (EXHIBIT NO. 30 MARKED FOR
16 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (3 pages)
17 Sworn Statement)

18 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Thank you. And you know that we
19 look at the nine evaluative criteria, which
20 includes your ballot box survey, thorough study
21 of your application materials, your compliance
22 with the state ethics law.

23 JUDGE HOCKER: Right.

24 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Check for economic conflicts of
25 interest, past screenings, and newspaper

1 articles in which your name appears, as well as
2 the ballot box survey. In the interest of time,
3 which we have greatly impeded on your arrival
4 time.

5 JUDGE HOCKER: That's okay. Not a problem.

6 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: We will dispense with the opening
7 statement. Mr. Gentry will ask some questions,
8 perhaps members of the commission, and we'll
9 offer an opportunity for you to make whatever
10 closing remarks you'd like.

11 JUDGE HOCKER: Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Mr. Gentry.

13 MR. GENTRY: Mr. Chairman.

14 EXAMINATION

15 MR. GENTRY:

16 **Q. Judge Hocker, you've been screened for reappointment**
17 **as a retired judge for the circuit court bench. Why**
18 **do you want to continue serving as a retired circuit**
19 **court judge?**

20 A. Mr. Gentry, I still enjoy what I'm doing and like to
21 continue that, and I believe that I can still be of
22 some service to the citizens of South Carolina.

23 **Q. Judge, what do you think your reputation is among**
24 **attorneys that practice before you?**

25 A. I sincerely hope it's a good reputation.

1 Q. Judge Hocker, the commission received 301 ballot box
2 surveys regarding you with 37 additional comments.
3 The ballot box surveys, for example, contain the
4 following positive comments: Judge Hocker is an
5 excellent judge who is more than qualified to
6 continue the position. He's extremely levelheaded,
7 hardworking, respectful, fair, and the list goes on.
8 I've never had a bad experience as an attorney in
9 front of Judge Hocker. Another one commented, I have
10 litigated numerous cases in front of Judge Hocker
11 since his election to the circuit court bench and
12 have the utmost respect for his character and
13 diligence in serving our state in this role. I was
14 delighted to hear that Judge Hocker would be applying
15 to stay on the bench in an active retired capacity in
16 the coming years. I cannot think of a better
17 candidate to do so. Only three of the written
18 comments expressed any concerns, indicating potential
19 issues with demeanor and ability to remain unbiased.
20 What response would you offer to those concerns?

21 A. Well, you know, I strive every day to exercise proper
22 judicial temperament, try to exercise a fair amount
23 of humility, and if that lawyer or lawyers felt like
24 I was not exercising proper demeanor, I apologize. I
25 hate that because that's something I try to be aware

1 of every day that I'm on the bench.

2 **Q. Thank you, Judge Hocker.**

3 MR. GENTRY: I would note that the Piedmont Citizens
4 Committee found Judge Hocker qualified in
5 evaluative criteria of constitutional
6 qualifications, physical health, and mental
7 stability. The committee found him well
8 qualified in evaluative criteria of ethical
9 fitness, professional and academic ability,
10 character, reputation, experience, and judicial
11 temperament. The committee stated in summary,
12 Judge Hocker enjoys a well deserved reputation
13 as an excellent and hardworking circuit court
14 judge. The committee appreciates his service and
15 recommends him wholeheartedly for consideration
16 by the commission as a retired judge. I would
17 just note for the record that any concerns
18 raised during the investigation regarding the
19 candidate were incorporated in the questioning
20 today. Mr. Chairman, I have no further
21 questions.

22 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Questions? Senator
23 Garrett.

24 SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you, Judge Hocker, for being
25 willing to serve again. He's one of our best.

1 JUDGE HOCKER: Thank you, Senator.

2 SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you so much. He helped us on
3 our criminal dockets. I don't know, but after
4 COVID, we were just in a desperate position.
5 And Judge Hocker's unique ability to get the bar
6 together is what he did. He got us all together
7 and worked out an arrangement. And you would
8 hit us hard, Judge. You would tell us, these 20
9 cases got to get done, these 20 cases got to get
10 done, et cetera, et cetera. And he grabbed the
11 bull by the horn, and he got it done. So I
12 sincerely appreciate that. And I think the
13 members of the bar really appreciated us being
14 able to get someone to lead us to get this done.
15 And although you were from the open seat, you
16 were there in Laurens in a traditional seat.
17 And it's going to be wonderful if we can have
18 you there. And I hope Judge Kittredge will find
19 it in his infinite wisdom to keep you there as
20 much as we can. Because we need you, we care
21 about you, and you're an example of what all
22 judges should be. Thank you so much.

23 JUDGE HOCKER: Thank you, Senator. Appreciate that
24 very much.

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Other questions, other comments?

1 Judge, I want to just applaud you again and your
2 willingness to do this and the respect that you
3 enjoy, as Senator Garrett has said, who
4 obviously you know, but by the folks who don't
5 know you. And you are able to sit back and do
6 other things if you want, but you have chosen to
7 continue serving the people. And you're doing
8 it well with a light robe and a light touch in a
9 most efficient way, which is a great thing for
10 the state that Chief Justice Kittredge will have
11 now at his ready ability to send you to go do,
12 in some eyes, the Lord's work, but definitely
13 the State's judicial work. So kudos to you and
14 your willingness to continue doing that.

15 JUDGE HOCKER: Thank you, Senator.

16 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Unless there are other questions,
17 now the floor is yours for any comments to close
18 this out before I make one last little bit of
19 language.

20 JUDGE HOCKER: I just appreciate the opportunity to
21 appear before you, and I look forward to
22 continuing on the bench. Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Very well. And if you will, let me
24 just remind you, again, as we maintain a very
25 close adherence to the letter and the spirit of

1 the ethics law, any violation by you, which we
2 don't expect, would allow us to call you back.
3 You do understand that?

4 JUDGE HOCKER: Sure.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And so with that, Judge, again, we
6 thank you very much.

7 JUDGE HOCKER: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Godspeed to you on your travels
9 back, not that far, but up the road.

10 JUDGE HOCKER: Thank you. You all have a great rest
11 of your day.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Take care.

13 (Off the record)

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, Judge, welcome.

15 JUDGE POGUE: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it.

16 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Raise that right hand.

17 TIMOTHY POGUE, having been first duly sworn, was
18 examined and testified as follows:

19 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: You got two statements ready to be
20 entered in the record. Any objection by you?

21 JUDGE POGUE: No, sir, none at all.

22 (EXHIBIT NO. 31 MARKED FOR
23 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (5 pages)
24 PDQ)

25 (EXHIBIT NO. 32 MARKED FOR

1 IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES (4 pages)
2 Sworn Statement)

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Thank you. Pull that mic back a
4 little bit.

5 JUDGE POGUE: And I have been accused -- see, I have
6 got hearing aids now, and people say that my
7 voice drops now, and I feel like I'm yelling.

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Well, ain't no yelling going on in
9 here today, I'll assure you. Thank you, and my
10 apologies for us being tardy in getting to you.
11 We will make very quick work of this. We'll
12 start with questions by Ms. Adler, and then if
13 the members of the commission have questions,
14 we'll go to them, and then to you for any final
15 word you might have. So welcome. Ms. Adler,
16 the floor is yours.

17 MS. ADLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 EXAMINATION

19 MS. ADLER:

20 **Q. Good afternoon, Judge Pogue.**

21 **A. Good afternoon.**

22 **Q. Judge Pogue, you're being screened for initial**
23 **appointment as an active retired judge on the family**
24 **court bench. Why do you want to serve as an active**
25 **retired family court judge?**

1 A. Well, I've served for -- since 2008. I have held
2 court in all 46 counties of this state. I think I'm
3 the only one that I know of right now that does that.
4 My wife told me that now that I had reached the age
5 of statutory senility, that I still needed to go out
6 and find some work because she certainly wasn't going
7 to curtail her spending habits. She said I could
8 still have three meals a day, two of them at home,
9 but one was not lunch. But seriously, I've been at
10 it a long, long time. I think I was third in
11 seniority when I did have to retire last year. I am
12 also mediating because I feel like it's my job still
13 to move as many cases as quickly through the judicial
14 system as we can. I still feel like that I have a
15 lot to offer, and I look forward to doing that.

16 **Q. Thank you. Judge Pogue, what do you think your**
17 **reputation is among the attorneys that have practiced**
18 **before you?**

19 A. I feel it's very good in that, as I said, I started
20 my mediation business on January the 1st of this
21 year, and I have probably done at least 70 or 75
22 mediations this year. I have done them in all parts
23 of the state. I've done them in Rock Hill. I've
24 done them in Sumter. I've done them in Aiken. I've
25 done them in Charleston. I've done them all over the

1 state. And a lot of my colleagues are appointing me
2 to these things, but then a lot of the attorneys
3 throughout the state have also selected me to do
4 their mediation for them.

5 Q. Thank you. Judge Pogue, the commission received 414
6 ballot box surveys regarding you with 48 additional
7 comments. By way of example, the ballot box survey
8 contained the following positive comments:
9 "Incredibly gifted family judge. He's always
10 well-prepared and never afraid to do the right thing.
11 He is a blessing to the bar. Another judge who may
12 get some negative feedback for demeanor. If, when,
13 he does, it is going to be from those who make their
14 careers off of delay. He is a no-nonsense docket
15 clearer and is sorely needed due to his extensive
16 career and ability to make decisions that will stand.
17 Use him liberally to keep cases moving." And
18 finally, "The gold standard. We are fortunate Judge
19 Pogue is still willing to serve in this capacity. He
20 offers a wealth of experience, patience, assistance,
21 and insightful adjudication."

22 A. It sounds like they're about trying to elevate me to
23 sainthood or something. I don't know.

24 Q. In fact, only three of the written comments expressed
25 concerns, specifically about your judicial

1 **temperament. What response would you offer to this**
2 **concern?**

3 A. I think my temperament is good. I have never tried
4 to throw any attorney or litigant or witness under
5 the bus. You have to draw that fine line between
6 moving the case along and not offending anybody. I
7 don't feel that my demeanor has ever been negative in
8 any manner whatsoever. There may be a few of them
9 that didn't like the result, but I think the vast
10 majority of the comments, it sounds like, were
11 positive. And, you know, we all have long weeks and
12 bad days, but if I could put up with John Gallman for
13 a whole week trial, I think I can pretty much handle
14 anything.

15 **Q. Thank you, Judge. Judge Pogue, there has been one**
16 **lawsuit filed against you since your last screening.**
17 **This case was filed in 2023 by Eugene Corey Dingell**
18 **in federal court in Charleston. Please briefly**
19 **explain the nature and disposition of this lawsuit.**

20 A. Ma'am, I don't recall that gentleman whatsoever. I
21 tried to pull my notes on that, but I don't have any
22 notes on that case. I wouldn't know him if he walked
23 in the room. My understanding is that he is
24 dissatisfied with any judge that has heard any bit of
25 his action, to the best of my recollection. From

1 reading the complaint, it appears that he was not
2 present for the hearing and is claiming that he did
3 not receive notice. Well, of course, as we all know,
4 it's not my job to send out notices or anything. But
5 anyway, I don't recall it whatsoever, and I don't
6 know much about the federal system, but I think the
7 magistrate has requested or given his opinion that
8 the case needs to be dismissed.

9 **Q. Thank you, Judge Pogue.**

10 MS. ADLER: I would note that the Peedee Citizens
11 Committee found Judge Pogue qualified in the
12 evaluative criteria of constitutional
13 qualifications, physical health, and mental
14 stability. The committee found him well
15 qualified in the evaluative criteria of ethical
16 fitness, professional and academic ability,
17 character, reputation, experience, and judicial
18 temperament. I'll note here for the record that
19 any concerns raised during the investigation
20 regarding the candidate were incorporated into
21 the questioning of the candidate today. Mr.
22 Chairman, I have no further questions.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right, Mr. Jordan.

24 Representative Jordan.

25 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Judge, it's 4:00 last day, last candidate. I'm
2 sorry, I had some truly wonderful, beautiful
3 things to say about you, but I'm restrained by
4 time and so I can't do that today. Nor am I
5 going to bring up the last time I saw you at a
6 Kentucky-South Carolina basketball game and at
7 the end when my Gamecocks were successful, you
8 were knocking women and children over going up
9 the aisle there. But I merely wish to say thank
10 you. We need your experience in the family
11 court. I know you mediated a case with me a
12 while back, and my client did not get the crock
13 pot, and she's still upset about that. But I
14 want to tell you how much the bar in our area,
15 in Florence, Marion, appreciates both your
16 willingness to participate as a retired actor
17 but also to roll your sleeves up and help move
18 some of these cases, some of which require some
19 wisdom, and how I've seen in some of those cases
20 where your experience is just the right dose, so
21 to speak, to get the case resolved so that the
22 litigants say well, that's a retired family
23 court judge who was recently involved and knows
24 his stuff and you've been a tremendous benefit.
25 So to that degree, thank you for what you do.

1 JUDGE POGUE: Thank you, sir. I appreciate those
2 comments.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Other questions?

4 MR. STROM: Quickly.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Mr. Strom.

6 MR. STROM: I just want to echo the same thing.

7 We've known each other a long time. You're an
8 excellent guy, a great judge, and your ballot
9 box reviews are as strong any we see. You know
10 a lot of people and a lot of people have good
11 things to say about you. Thank you for your
12 service and your continued service.

13 JUDGE POGUE: Thank you, sir.

14 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Other questions? Other comments?

15 Judge, you bring a certain levity to this
16 proceedings today, as no doubt you do in your
17 courtroom, where it is more needed perhaps than
18 ever. And so for that light touch and the
19 patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon, you
20 are to be commended for wanting to yield to your
21 wife's call that you continue to leave the house
22 day in and day out, Monday through Friday.

23 JUDGE POGUE: I left her with a smile on her face,
24 knowing that hopefully I'll leave here all right
25 and I've got two more mediations lined up this

1 week.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Well, Judge, thank you very much
3 for your willingness to continue to serve and
4 not forced retirement but forced work at the
5 call of the Chief Justice, who no doubt will
6 employ you mightily.

7 JUDGE POGUE: He has already requested and I have
8 agreed to handle a case that you all have
9 probably dealt with, all of the Richland County
10 judges with.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: No names, please. No names.

12 JUDGE POGUE: I'm not giving any names.

13 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Please, no names.

14 JUDGE POGUE: No, sir, I'm not giving you any names
15 but he has asked that I handle one final hearing
16 on that matter, and I have begrudgingly agreed
17 to do it.

18 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Bless you for answering the call.

19 JUDGE POGUE: Thank you, sir.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: I offered you an opportunity for a
21 closing statement. I'll do it now if you feel
22 like you need to say anything further.

23 JUDGE POGUE: How about sine die? You all are ready
24 to go, aren't you?

25 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Just about. And with that, and so

1 before you take off, one more exchange by you.
2 You understand that we could call you back in
3 the very unlikely event that there would be a
4 violation by you of the letter of the spirit of
5 ethics law. The final release of the record of
6 qualifications marks the date when this record
7 is closed. I just need an amen to the fact that
8 you know we can call you back.

9 JUDGE POGUE: Yes, sir, I'm aware of that.

10 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Thank you so much, Judge.

11 JUDGE POGUE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: And we will now proceed to let's
13 take a quick break, but, Judge, we're finished
14 with this, and thank you again so much.

15 JUDGE POGUE: Thank you, sir.

16 (Off the record)

17 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: We have two final ballots to cast
18 here, and so we are going to go back to the
19 Master in Equity race in Berkeley, and that
20 would be the two candidates, if you will,
21 publish those candidates' names, Erin.

22 MS. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. For the Master in Equity of
23 Berkeley County, we have W.T. Geddings, Jr. and
24 J. Camden West.

25 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I would move

1 that we find candidate Geddings, Jr. not
2 qualified.

3 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Is there a second?

4 SENATOR SABB: I second.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. All in favor of that
6 say aye.

7 GROUP: Aye.

8 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Any opposed? There being none, all
9 right.

10 MR. STROM: Mr. Chairman, for the record, I have Ms.
11 Blackley's proxy.

12 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. And no opposition on that
13 motion thus far, correct?

14 MR. STROM: Correct.

15 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Okay. Representative Caskey.

16 MS. CRAWFORD: The next -- the remaining candidate.

17 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I would move
18 that we find candidate West qualified.

19 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. All in favor of that
21 say aye.

22 GROUP: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. The next race.

24 MS. CRAWFORD: The next race is Master in Equity for
25 Richland County. We have two candidates,

1 Stephanie N. Lawrence and Ian D. McVey.

2 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Representative Safran.

3 REPRESENTATIVE SAFRAN: I move to find them both
4 qualified.

5 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. Motion made by
6 Representative Andy Safran. Seconded by the
7 world. All right.

8 MS. CRAWFORD: Okay. And we have two active retired
9 circuit court -- no. We have one active retired
10 circuit court judge.

11 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Let me, for the record, motion made
12 and affirmed on the motion by Mr. Safran
13 regarding Lawrence and McVey.

14 MS. CRAWFORD: Okay. Mr. Chairman, the Honorable
15 Donald Bruce Hocker, active retired circuit
16 court. And we just need finding as to
17 qualifications.

18 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
19 find the candidate qualified.

20 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: All right. All in favor say aye.

22 GROUP: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Ayes have it unanimously.

24 MS. CRAWFORD: And the Honorable Timothy H. Pogue,
25 active retired family court.

1 REPRESENTATIVE CASKEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
2 find the candidate qualified.

3 SENATOR GARRETT: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Motion made and seconded. All in
5 favor say aye.

6 GROUP: Aye.

7 CHAIRMAN RANKIN: Unanimously adopted. And that,
8 ladies and gentlemen, is a wrap. Thank you,
9 Madam Court Reporter. Thank you, Dennis. God
10 bless you all. We are now off the record until
11 the call of further business.

12 (There being no further questions, the hearings
13 concluded at 4:10 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, KATHRYN BOSTROM, COURT REPORTER AND NOTARY PUBLIC
IN AND FOR THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA AT LARGE, HEREBY
CERTIFY THAT I REPORTED THE HEARINGS ON Monday, THE 2nd
DAY OF DECEMBER 2024, THAT THE WITNESS WAS FIRST DULY
SWORN BY ME AND THAT THE FOREGOING 180 PAGES CONSTITUTE A
TRUE AND CORRECT TRANSCRIPTION OF MY STENOMASK REPORT OF
SAID DEPOSITION.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I AM NEITHER ATTORNEY NOR
COUNSEL FOR, NOR RELATED TO OR EMPLOYED BY ANY OF THE
PARTIES CONNECTED WITH THIS ACTION, NOR AM I FINANCIALLY
INTERESTED IN SAID CAUSE.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT THE ORIGINAL OF SAID
TRANSCRIPT WAS THEREAFTER SEALED BY ME AND DELIVERED TO
ERIN CRAWFORD, GRESSETTE BUILDING, 1101 PENDLETON STREET,
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, WHO WILL RETAIN THIS SEALED
ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT AND SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR FILING
SAME WITH THE COURT PRIOR TO TRIAL OR ANY HEARING WHICH
MIGHT RESULT IN A FINAL ORDER ON ANY ISSUE.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE SET MY HAND AND SEAL THIS
27TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2024.



KATHRYN B. BOSTROM, COURT REPORTER

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES AUGUST 23, 2032

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