



**JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION
PERSONAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE
2024**

Court, Position, and Seat # for which you are applying: SC Court of Appeals, Seat 4

1. Name: The Honorable Paula H. Thomas

Name that you are known by if different from above
(Example: A Nickname): N/A

Are you currently serving in some capacity as a judge?
Yes, SC Court of Appeals, Seat 4

Home Address: [Redacted]

County of Residence: Georgetown

Business Address: 401 Cleland Street, Georgetown, SC 29440

E-Mail Address: Personal: [Redacted]
Work: [Redacted]

Telephone Number: (home): [Redacted]
(office): (843) 545-3551
(cell): [Redacted]

2. Date of Birth: [Redacted]1957
Place of Birth: Sumter, South Carolina
Social Security Number: [Redacted]

3. Are you a citizen of South Carolina? Yes.
Have you been a resident of this state for at least the immediate past five years? Yes

4. SCDL# or SCHD#: [Redacted]
Voter Registration Number: [Redacted]

5. Have you served in the military? No

6. Family Status:
Married, Never divorced- Three Children
[Redacted]

7. List each college and law school you attended, including the dates of your attendance, the degrees you received, and if you left an institution without receiving a degree, the reason for your departure.
 - a) University of South Carolina- 1976-1979 BIS
 - b) University of South Carolina- 1979-1981 MEd.
 - c) University of South Carolina Law School- 1983-1986 JD

8. List the significant activities in which you took part during your attendance at law school. Give the years you were involved in these activities and list any leadership positions you held.

USC Law School, Legislative Council

9. List the states in which you have been admitted to practice law and the year of each admission. Also list any states in which you took the bar exam but were never admitted to the practice of law. Please indicate the number of times you took the exam in each state.

Admitted to the South Carolina Bar in 1986

10. Describe chronologically, since graduation from law school, your legal experience. Please include a list of all positions held in which you worked in a legal capacity. Describe the general character of your practice and divide it into periods with dates if its character changed over the years. Please also describe the extent to which you were involved with the administrative and financial management of each of these entities, including management of trust accounts.
 - a) January 1987- September 1987: Law Offices of Kenneth W. Thorton Georgetown, SC- Associate- Family Court and Circuit Court matters;
 - b) September 1987- August 1988: Rubillo & Thomas Attorneys at Law Georgetown, SC Partner- Family Court and Circuit Court matters;
 - c) August 1988- January 1994: Law Office of Paula H. Thomas Pawleys Island, SC- Sole Practitioner: Family Court & Circuit Court;
 - d) January 1993- January 1994: Thomas & Gundling Attorneys at Law Pawleys Island, SC- Partner: Family Court & Circuit Court;
 - e) January 1994-May 1994: Lawimore, Thomas, Gundling & Kelaher Pawleys Island, SC- Partner: Family Court & Circuit Court
 - f) May 1994- January 1995: Thomas, Gundling & Kelaher Pawleys Island, SC- Partner: Family Court & Circuit Court
 - g) January 1995- July 1996: Law Office of Paula H. Thomas Pawleys Island, SC- Sole Practitioner, Family Court & Circuit Court

Justices/judges applying for re-election to their current position may omit Questions 11–17. If you are a full-time judge seeking a judgeship different than your current position, Questions 11-17 should be answered based on your experience prior to serving on the bench.

11-17 Omitted- I am currently a full-time judge.

18. Have you ever held judicial office? If so, list the periods of your service, the courts involved, and whether you were elected or appointed. Describe the jurisdiction of each of the courts and note any limitations on the jurisdiction of each court. Yes.
- Elected May 1996, SC Circuit Court, At-Large Seat #1
 - Elected May 1998, SC Circuit Court, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, Seat #1
 - Elected February 2007, SC Court of Appeals, Seat #4
 - Re-elected SC Court of Appeals, Seat #4
19. If the answer to question 18 is yes, describe or list five of your most significant orders or opinions and give the citations if they were reported. Also, list citations to any appellate review of these orders or opinions.
- Arrow Pointe Fed. Credit Union v. Bailey, 432 S.C. 373, 852 S.E.2d 473 (Ct. App. 2020) (holding as a matter of first impression that the replacement mortgage doctrine would not be adopted because the issue as one for our legislature), aff'd, 438 S.C. 573, 884 S.E. 2d 506 (2023).
 - State v. Brown, 414 S.C. 14, 776 S.E.2d 506 917 (Ct. App. 2015) (holding no reasonable expectation of privacy exists in an abandoned cell phone left at the scene of a crime, even if the device is locked and password-protected), aff'd, 423 S.C. 519, 815 S.E.2d 761 (2018).
 - State v. Dent, 434 S.C. 357, 863 S.E.2d 478 (Ct. App. 2012) (dissenting) (dissenting after applying the harmless error analysis in a criminal case, which was thereafter reversed by our supreme court), rev'd 440 S.C. 449, 892 S.E. 2d 294 (2023).
 - Campbell v. Robinson, 398 S.C. 12, 726 S.E.2d 221 (Ct. App. 2012) (holding as a matter of first impression that whether an engagement ring is the donee's property after the engagement is cancelled is a question for the jury).
 - State v. Mitchell, 378 S.C. 305, 662 S.E. 2d 493 (Ct. App. 2008) (explaining the application of the Confrontation Clause to prior statements) cert. Dismissed as improvidently granted, (Feb. 16, 2010).
20. List all courts in which you have been admitted to practice and list the dates of your admission. Give the same information for administrative bodies that require a special admission to practice.
- 1986-Admitted to practice before the State Courts of South Carolina.
 - 1998-Admitted to practice before the Federal District Court.
21. Have you taught law-related courses or lectured at bar association conferences, educational institutions, or continuing legal or judicial education programs? If so, briefly describe each course or lecture.
- 1993- Speaker: Restructured State Government, the State of Administrative Law
 - 1996-Speaker: So You Want To Be A Judge, Women In Law, Columbia, SC
 - 2012-Speaker: Being A Judge and How To Get There, Sumter Ladies Club
 - 2012-Present- Misc. talks to local Rotary clubs, schools and in house staff attorneys.
22. Provide, as a separate attachment, your continuing legal or judicial education report from the past five years. See Attached.

23. List all published books and articles you have written and give citations and the dates of publication for each. None.
24. Please furnish as a separate attachment, two examples of legal articles, briefs, orders, or other legal writings for which you can claim sole or primary authorship. If you cannot claim sole authorship, please explain the extent to which you are the primary author, to include a description of the other authors and their contributions. The writing samples are for the Commission's use only and will not be published. (If you are a judge and are not seeking a different type of judgeship, this question is inapplicable.) N/A
25. What is your rating or membership status, if any, by any legal rating organization; such as, Best Lawyers, Chambers, Legal 500, Martindale-Hubbell, Who's Who Legal, Super Lawyers, Million Dollar Advocates Forum, etc.? If you are currently a member of the judiciary, list your last available rating, if any.
To my knowledge I am not rated.
26. List all bar associations and professional organizations of which you are a member and give the titles and dates of any offices you have held in such groups.
(a) South Carolina Bar Association
(b) South Carolina Appellate Judges Association
(c) American Bar Association
27. Have you ever held public office other than judicial office? If so, list the periods of your service, the office or offices involved, and whether you were elected or appointed. Also, state whether or not you have timely filed your report with the State Ethics Commission during the period you held public office. If not, were you ever subject to a penalty? If so, give details, including dates.
Yes. Elected to SC House Seat 108, November 1992, served until June 1996. All reports were timely filed. No penalties.
28. For sitting or former judges, list all employment you had while serving as a judge (whether full-time or part-time, contractual or at will, consulting or otherwise) other than elected judicial office. Specify your dates of employment, employer, major job responsibilities, and supervisor.
None.
29. Have you ever been an unsuccessful candidate for elective, judicial, or other public office? If so, give details, including dates.
a) Ran unsuccessfully for SC Court of Appeals Seat #2 in 2004
b) Ran unsuccessfully for Chief of SC Court of Appeals in 2016

30. Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law, teaching of law, or holding judicial or other public office? If so, give details, including a description of your occupation, business, or profession, the dates of your employment, and the name of your business or employer.
- a) December 1981- November 1982- Intervention Specialist- Sumter Alcohol & Drug Abuse, Sumter, SC
 - b) December 1982- May 1983- Counselor, SC Vocational Rehabilitation, Sumter, SC
31. Are you now an officer or director or involved in the management of any business enterprise? Explain the nature of the business, your duties, and the term of your service.
No.
32. Are you now or have you ever been employed as a “lobbyist,” as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(13), or have you acted in the capacity of a “lobbyist’s principal,” as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(14)? If so, give the dates of your employment or activity in such capacity and specify by whom you were directed or employed.
No.
33. Provide, **as a separate attachment**, a complete, current financial net worth statement that itemizes in detail:
A complete, current financial net worth statement was provided to the Commission.
34. (a) Have you filed state and federal income tax returns for the last 5 years? If no, please provide details. Yes.
(b) Have you or any business with which you are associated been delinquent in any local, state, or federal taxes? If yes, please provide details. No.
(c) Has a tax lien or other collection procedure ever been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? If yes, please provide details. No.
(d) Have you ever defaulted on a student loan? If so, please provide details. No.
(e) Have you ever filed for bankruptcy? If so, please provide details, along with proof of satisfaction of any liens or defaults. No.
35. Since filing with the Commission your letter of intent to run for judicial office, have you accepted lodging, transportation, entertainment, food, meals, beverages, money, or any other thing of value as defined by S.C. Code § 2-17-10(1) from a lobbyist or lobbyist’s principal? If so, please specify the item or items you received, the date of receipt, and the lobbyist or lobbyist’s principal involved. No.
36. Itemize (by amount, type, and date) all expenditures, other than those for travel and room and board, made by you, or on your behalf in furtherance of your candidacy for the position you seek. If you have spent over \$100, have you reported your expenditures to the House and Senate Ethics Committees? N/A
37. List the recipient and amount of all contributions made by you, a member of your immediate family, or by a business with whom you are associated, to members of the General Assembly within the past four years. If you participate in any employer-mandated

contributions to a PAC or any other political entity, please describe and note your personal involvement in contributions. If you are a sitting judge, please include such contributions since your last screening.

My husband contributed \$100 to House member Lee Hewitt in 2023. He is the representative for the area in which we live.

38. Have you or has anyone acting on your behalf solicited or collected funds to aid in the promotion of your candidacy? If so, please specify the amount, solicitor, donor, and date of the solicitation.

No.

39. Describe any financial arrangements or business relationships you have, or have had in the past, that could constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position you seek or currently hold. Explain how you would resolve any potential conflict of interest.

None.

40. Describe any interest you or a member of your immediate family has in real property:
- (a) in which there is a potential conflict of interest with your involvement in a South Carolina state or local public agency; None.
 - (b) in which there have been public improvements of \$200 or more that adjoins property in which there have been public improvements of \$200 or more; or None.
 - (c) which was sold, leased, or rented to a state or local public agency in South Carolina. None.

List the interest you hold and the value and location of the property. Identify as applicable the:

- (a) nature of any potential conflict of interest; N/A
- (b) nature and value of any public improvements; and N/A
- (c) South Carolina state or local public agency which purchased or is leasing or renting such property. N/A

Attach a copy of any contract or agreement.

41. Identify any personal property interest you or a member of your immediate family sold, leased, or rented to a South Carolina state or local public agency. Identify the property, its amount or value, and the name of the agency. Attach a copy of any contract or agreement.

None.

42. For sitting judges, if you currently hold an interest in stock or other securities or have held such an interest, list each stock you currently own or owned during the prior calendar year. If you prefer, you may attach broker or account records containing the requested information instead of listing it here.

None.

43. For sitting judges, have you ever accepted anything of value from an attorney or litigant in a matter currently or previously before you or your court? If so, please give the details, including the name of the attorney or litigant and the thing of value you received.

No.

44. For sitting judges, have you used the services of your staff, for which you did not pay, while campaigning for this office?
No.

45. Have you ever been arrested, charged, or held by federal, state, or other law enforcement authorities for violation or for suspicion of violation of any federal law or regulation, state law or regulation, or county or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, or any other law, including another country's law? If so, give details but do not include traffic violations subject to a penalty of \$125 or less. You must include any and all arrests, including, but not limited to, offenses for driving under the influence or similar traffic offenses. Include all arrests that resulted in expungement, which will be redacted. If you have questions regarding whether to include an offense, please contact the Commission.

[All answers have been received and considered by the Commission, and as noted above, any expunged matters are redacted from the record.]

46. Have you, to your knowledge, ever been under federal, state, or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute? If yes, explain.
No.

47. Have you ever been sued by a client? Have you ever been a named party (personally or professionally) in or had a pecuniary interest in any civil or criminal proceedings? If so, give details, including, but not limited to, dates, and resolutions.
There has been no individual lawsuits against me or my family. I have been sued in my capacity as a judge along with other judges on the Court of Appeals. These papers (unserved with no appropriate summons) are forwarded to the Attorney General for their consideration. None of these matters have become actual cases in our courts.

48. If you are in private practice, are you covered by malpractice insurance and, if so, how long have you carried malpractice insurance? If applicable, have you ever been covered by a tail policy? If so, please explain when you were covered by a tail policy. Also, if applicable, indicate your coverage and deductible for your current malpractice policy.
N/A

49. Have you ever, in South Carolina or any other jurisdiction, as a lawyer, judge, or other professional, been cautioned with or without a finding of misconduct, sanctioned, or disciplined for lawyer, judicial, or other professional misconduct or has any jurisdiction found that you committed any misconduct? If so, give the details and describe any final disposition. Include any and all confidential and public sanctions, disciplines, letters of caution, or findings of misconduct of any kind. Private or confidential dispositions will be redacted.

[Yes and no responses are redacted for all candidates unless there is a public discipline.]

50. Have you ever been investigated by the Department of Social Services? No
Has your name ever been enrolled on the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect?
No.
51. Have you directly or indirectly requested the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened, or have you been offered a conditional pledge of support by any legislator pending the outcome of your screening? Have you received the assurance of any public official or public employee that they will seek the pledge of any member of the General Assembly as to your election for the position for which you are being screened? If so, give details.
No.
52. Have you requested any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf before the final and formal screening report has been released? Describe the campaigning you have done for this election and include a list of those individuals you have asked to campaign on your behalf and, to the best of your knowledge, those who have campaigned for you on their own initiative.
No. The only action I have taken to date is to prepare my application.
53. Are you familiar with the 48-hour rule, which prohibits a candidate from seeking pledges until after the draft report becomes final, which occurs on the day and time specified on the Commission's published screening schedule?
Yes.
54. Since submitting your letter of intent to become a candidate, have you or has anyone acting on your behalf contacted any member of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission about your candidacy or intention to become a candidate? If so, give details.
No.
55. List the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of five (5) persons from whom you are providing references. (Letters Attached)
- (a) Laura Crowther, [Redacted]
 - (b) Dr. Gerald Harmon, [Redacted]
 - (c) Carol Jayroe, [Redacted]
 - (d) R. Trippett Boineau, [Redacted]
 - (e) Margaret Ann Kneese, [Redacted]
56. Are you active on or a member of a social media or Internet site such as, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, etc.?
Yes.
If so, please list the account names for each account and the relevant platform.
Facebook- [Redacted]
How would your use of social media or other similar types of Internet sites be affected if you were serving in a judicial capacity?

Only personal information is posted, mostly about horses and grandchildren.

57. List all civic, charitable, educational, social, and fraternal organizations of which you are or have been a member during the past five years and include any offices held in such a group, and any professional honors, awards, or other forms of recognition received and not listed elsewhere. N/A

58. Provide any other information that may reflect positively or negatively on your candidacy, or which you believe should be disclosed in connection with consideration of you for nomination for the position you seek. This information may include how your life experiences have affected or influenced the kind or type of judge you have been or plan to be.

I have been a member of my court (SC Court of Appeals) since 2016 and am currently number two in seniority. My institutional knowledge and experience in my current position as well as my past experience as a Circuit Court Judge and a Legislator is valuable to the Court and the State as a whole.

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

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

Signature: _____

Sworn to before me this ____ day of _____, 2024.

(Notary Signature)

(Notary Printed Name)
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission Expires: _____