



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

**Supreme Court/Court of Appeals  
(Incumbent)**

Full Name: The Honorable Paula H. Thomas

Business Address: 401 Cleland St, Georgetown, Sc 29440

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1. Do you plan to serve your full term if re-elected?  
Yes, at this time it is my intent.
2. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day?  
No, I have no plans at this time to return to private practice.
3. Have you met the Constitutional requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice?  
Yes.
4. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?  
I indicate my willingness to speak with a party once they get the other parties presence via phone or personally.
5. If you disclosed something that had the appearance of bias, but you believed it would not actually prejudice your impartiality, what deference would you give a party that requested your recusal? Would you grant such a motion?  
Yes, I would. Even if I did not think it would affect my ability to be fair and impartial. It is important to also avoid the look of impropriety.
6. What standards have you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality?  
I do not accept gifts or social hospitality unless it is provided to all judges as a group. I do however accept gifts of food around the holidays.

7. How would you handle a situation in which you became aware of misconduct or appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or of a fellow judge?  
If the lawyer or judge has committed a violation of the rules of professional conduct or judicial conduct that raises a substantial question as to that lawyer/judge's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness, I would inform the disciplinary council.
8. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe  
No.
9. How do you prepare for cases that come before you?  
I carefully review the briefs of the parties, the record presented to the court and apply the law on point.
10. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy?  
I understand very clearly that there are three branches to our government. The legislative branch makes the laws. The judicial branch applies and interprets the law; it does not make the law.
11. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. What activities do you plan to undertake to further this improvement of the legal system?  
I intend to conduct my activities in a way that does not demean the judicial office or interfere with the proper performances of my duties. I have spoken regarding the administration of justice and our judicial system and may continue to do so.
12. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge strains personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)? How do you address this?  
At this point in my career and this stage of my life, any strains to my personal relationships is very minimal. They tend to be logistical in nature and are easily addressed with proper planning.
13. Are you currently serving on any boards or committees? If so, in what capacity are you serving?  
No

14. Please describe your methods of analysis in matters of South Carolina's Constitution and its interpretation by explaining your approach in the following areas. Which area should be given the greatest weight?
- a. The use and value of historical evidence in practical application of the Constitution: I would give the most weight to the plain language. I would then give weight to precedent.
  - b. The use and value of an agency's interpretation of the Constitution: This would have the least impact upon my decision. Agencies should not interpret the constitution. Recently the United State Supreme Court decided in Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo 603 U.S. \_\_\_2024 WL 3208360 (June 28, 2024) to overrule precedent requiring a reviewing court to defer to permissible agency interpretations of statutes those agencies administered. The Court in Loper overruled Chevron USA Inc. v Natural Resources Defense Council Inc. 407 US 837, which demanded that courts mechanically afford binding deference to agency interpretations.
  - c. The use and value of documents produced contemporaneously to the Constitution, such as the minutes of the convention: I would attempt to determine the intent of it's authors. These contemporaneous documents could give me some indication of their intent.
15. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality?  
No.
16. Are you a member of any organization or association that, by policy or practice, prohibits or limits its membership on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin? If so, please identify the entity and explain if this organization practices invidious discrimination on any basis.  
No.
17. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period?  
Yes.

18. What do you feel is the appropriate demeanor for a judge and when do these rules apply?

To be willing to impartially listen to and be courteous to all parties. These rules apply at all times.

19. Is there a role for sternness or anger with attorneys?

Anger is not appropriate, sternness however may be.

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

Paula Thomas

Sworn to before me this 13 day of August, 2024.

Jessica Daniels

(Signature)

Jessica Daniels

(Print name)

Notary Public for S.C.

My Commission Expires: 02-04-2031

