



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

Circuit Court
(New Candidate)

Full Name: Christopher Dolan Taylor

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1. Why do you want to serve as a Circuit Court judge?

Our system of justice affects everyone. I truly believe in the United States Constitution and the laws of our great State of South Carolina. I have spent my professional career seeing the court system operate firsthand. It inspires me to serve as a circuit court judge and fulfill a desire to serve the people of the state and be the kind of judge that I believe the public desires to see – one that considers the merits of each case and provides a fair and just remedy based on the law-while showing respect, humility and integrity to and with those who come before the court. I would be truly honored to become a part of our judiciary.

2. Do you plan to serve your full term if elected?

Yes.

3. Do you have any plans to return to private practice one day?

No.

4. Have you met the Constitutional requirements for this position regarding age, residence, and years of practice?

Yes.

5. What is your philosophy regarding *ex parte* communications? Are there circumstances under which you could envision *ex parte* communications being tolerated?

Ex parte communications can do a disservice to all parties and represents impropriety or minimally the appearance of impropriety. And while *ex*

parte communications are permitted in limited circumstances, our system of justice envisions all parties having a fair opportunity to be informed as to the merits of the case and *ex parte* communications diminish the ability of the court to preserve this inherent fairness as to all parties. In almost all cases, keeping both sides equally involved in the adjudicative process brings about a fairer and most trustworthy result.

6. 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?

I would likely recuse myself in such a case. I would first carefully consider the merits of the allegation of bias or the appearance of bias and try to resolve the issue with the assistance of parties. Nevertheless, impartiality is critical in maintaining the credibility of the court, and therefore I would give strong deference toward recusal to maintain the integrity of the proceedings, if a resolution could not be reached. I would also seek guidance from senior judges as to their, if any, analogous experiences.

7. How would you handle the appearance of impropriety because of the financial or social involvement of your spouse or a close relative?

My spouse or close relative would be asked to immediately discontinue any activity that gave the appearance of impropriety because of financial or social involvement.

8. What standards would you set for yourself regarding the acceptance of gifts or social hospitality?

I will accept no gifts or social hospitality from any party, or anyone associated with a party, in a matter before me which would call my impartiality into question in a particular case, or in general. I do recognize that I may be in social situations where my role as a judge has no bearing on others' behavior towards me. However, I would remain ever vigilant that I don't engage in social settings of whatever nature, where my impartiality could be challenged later.

9. 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?

I would advise the attorney or fellow judge in private regarding any infirmity and discreetly notify someone who could be of assistance in providing access to help for the attorney such as a confidential referral to Lawyers helping Lawyers; where I was convinced of and had clear

knowledge of an infirmity. I would immediately report any suspected misconduct that I was convinced of to an agency such as the SC Disciplinary Commission, for review and action as appropriate.

10. 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.

11. Have you engaged in any fund-raising activities with any political, social, community, or religious organizations? Please describe.

No.

12. Do you have any business activities that you would envision remaining involved with if elected to the bench?

No.

13. If elected, how would you handle the drafting of orders?

This would be handled on a case-by-case basis. I envision taking the lead on drafting orders in appropriate cases and utilizing the assistance of a law clerk to review research with the responsibility for the work product, content, and review of any orders drafted, remaining with me. I could also place the responsibility of drafting orders on the parties where appropriate. In those instances, I would expect the prevailing party to draft an order that is accurate as to findings of fact and conclusions of law, and consistent with the court's ruling and any other rulings. I would provide each party an opportunity to review the proposed order and address any corrections or additions as necessary.

14. If elected, what methods would you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

I would use a calendar system to keep track of deadlines, including calendaring time in advance to research and draft orders and consider other matters on a timely basis. Also, from my experience in federal court, I would use status conferences where appropriate to assist in timely resolving cases.

15. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should

judges have in setting or promoting public policy?

A judge is required to review each case based on the facts and make decisions based on the merits, in accordance with the law. Judicial activism invites the judge to rule based on their personal belief or desire to "set" policy. I believe this has no place in the law and is outside of the dictates of our system of justice and the role of the judge.

16. Canon 4 allows a judge to engage in activities to improve the law, legal system, and administration of justice. If elected, what activities do you plan to undertake to further this improvement of the legal system?

Consistent with Canon 4, I would undertake more activities that would assist young lawyers, particularly opportunities where I can partner with the SC Bar. I would welcome opportunities (as appropriate) to speak to educational programs (legal education courses) to encourage students to remain focused on studious endeavors, including activities such as mock trials and debates wherein I would hope to participate as a volunteer judge or speaker, and improve knowledge of our legal system for young people.

17. Do you feel that the pressure of serving as a judge would strain personal relationships (i.e. spouse, children, friends, or relatives)?

No. The legal profession in general can create strain on all those involved and family responsibilities. Potentially, there would be opportunities for strain as my scheduled time in court would increase, but being a judge would not create additional strain to our marriage. My family fully supports my decision to become a judge.

How would you address this? My wife is very supportive of my endeavors to become a judge, and this support will continue. She is an attorney, and understands the time requirements of a judge. We practice compromise and communication to navigate family issues, and I expect we will use that same approach to additional requirements of me as a sitting judge.

18. The following list contains five categories of offenders that would perhaps regularly appear in your court. Discuss your philosophy on sentencing for these classes of offenders.

The particular circumstances of a case would dictate my sentencing philosophy. After years of prosecution experience on the state and federal level, I have learned that while each case is different, so is each offender. One of the hardest things a judge can do in the sentencing realm is to determine an appropriate sentence, while weighing the gravity of the

offense, along with particular characteristics of the person who stands before the court. I believe a person's background can have a substantial impact on their behavior, though it does not necessarily excuse their conduct.

a. Repeat offenders:

These offenders usually draw the most ire from the public. Despite their previous encounters with a court, the repeat offender, by definition, has not or will not comport their behavior to the law. I believe it is important to provide the public protection from such persons and stiffer penalties may be called for depending on the facts of the case. However, I would also readily weigh mitigation information as to history and characteristics of the offender in determining a sentence that is reasonable and fair given the facts of the case and that comports with the law.

b. Juveniles (that have been waived to the Circuit Court):

I had personal experience with handling a juvenile waiver hearing in the case of a 12-year-old who murdered his grandparents. That was a tragic situation, but waiver to Circuit Court was appropriate. Sentencing in juvenile cases as with other cases depends on the facts. However, because of their age, rehabilitation considerations should be explored. The children are our future, and we must weigh what is in their best interests against the gravity of the harm that was committed and how to best protect society.

c. White collar criminals:

These crimes can have a devastating impact on victims even though the crimes themselves may not appear as "violent" to the average person. I would consider, as with every case, the circumstances underlying the offense including the potential long-term effects on victims and society. But consistent with my belief in the role of a judge to consider all sides of the situation, I would certainly listen to arguments in mitigation before determining an appropriate sentence. The ability of the offender to make restitution and action to mitigate the impact of the harm before appearing before the court can also be important considerations.

d. Defendants with a socially and/or economically disadvantaged background:

It is important to recognize that a person's start in life may affect their outcome in life. All people should be treated fairly, and I would certainly consider someone's socio-economic background and weigh that along

with the offense in determining an appropriate sentence. These factors are still evaluated against the need for the public's protection.

e. Elderly defendants or those with some infirmity:

I would consider age, health, and other special conditions present in evaluating the appropriate remedy. These factors don't excuse behavior, but these factors weigh in terms of available care in situations where incarceration might be necessary. Also, alternative resolutions can be considered where appropriate.

19. Are you involved in any active investments from which you derive additional income that might impair your appearance of impartiality?

No.

20. Would you hear a case where you or a member of your family held a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved?

No.

21. Have you met the mandatory minimum hours requirement for continuing legal education courses for the past reporting period?

Yes.

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

In all cases judges should carry themselves in a manner that is respectful of the justice system as a whole. The judge should set the tone for courtroom, and a calm demeanor in stressful situations will often help the parties resolve issues in a respectful way. It is the judge's duty to maintain order and decorum in the courtroom. But I believe that the judge's duty can be accomplished most often is, if the judge's tone is one of dignity and respect and the judge shows courtesy to the litigants.

23. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to be angry with a member of the public, especially with a criminal defendant? Is anger ever appropriate in dealing with attorneys or pro se litigants?

Judges are human and may feel anger at parties or circumstances relevant to the case. It is not appropriate to reveal or display such anger during any proceedings.

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

Chloe Tyler

Sworn to before me this 29th day of August, 2024.

Loren Lamson
(Signature)

LOREN LAMSON
(Print Name)

Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission Expires: 9-13-2032

