



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

Circuit Court
(New Candidate)

Full Name: Justin T. Williams

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

Serving as a Circuit Court judge has been a dream I wanted to pursue since I was a prosecutor in the Fifth Judicial Circuit. Additionally, serving as a Circuit Court Judge aligns with my conviction to serve our state at the highest level my skill and ability allow.

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 should be avoided to protect the integrity of the judiciary and the judicial process. Canon 3 of the South Carolina Judicial Code of Conduct provides exceptions for *ex parte* communication, but my goal would be to involve all parties in all communication with the court.

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 give great deference to a party that requested my recusal if the party believed something I disclosed gave the appearance of bias. Upholding the judiciary's integrity, independence, and public confidence is vital to maintaining America's democracy. I would address recusal motions on a case-by-case basis to fully unpack the potential bias by seeking to understand the party's basis for the motion. I would more likely than not grant the recusal motion if the party articulates the appearance of bias, and I cannot clearly articulate how and why I can maintain my impartiality to the moving party's satisfaction.

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

I would confront the matter directly by requesting an ethics opinion from the South Carolina Bar Ethics Advisory Committee and the State Ethics Commission. Additionally, I would request that my spouse or close relative cease and desist the activity in question.

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

I would not accept gifts or social hospitality.

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?

First, I would discuss that matter with the accused. Then, I would report the matter the appropriate authorities as required by the Judicial Code of Conduct.

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.

I regularly contribute to my church and the University of South Carolina Alumni Association's Richard T. Greener Scholarship.

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?

On a case-by-case basis, I would determine if the use of a form order, a proposed order, or drafting an original order is most appropriate.

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

I would use the calendar invite function in Microsoft Outlook to set deadline milestones to ensure all deadlines are met. I will also have regular meetings with my staff to ensure we operate efficiently and effectively to meet all deadlines.

15. What is your philosophy on "judicial activism," and what effect should judges have in setting or promoting public policy?

Judicial activism is inappropriate. Judges must follow the law and should not get involved in setting or promoting public policy.

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?

At a minimum, I would make myself available to attend and speak at continuing legal education events sponsored by the South Carolina Bar Association. If time allows, I would pursue advanced legal education for personal and professional growth and development.

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

No.

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.

- a. Repeat offenders:
- b. Juveniles (that have been waived to the Circuit Court):
- c. White collar criminals:
- d. Defendants with a socially and/or economically disadvantaged background:
- e. Elderly defendants or those with some infirmity:

I will treat all defendants who appear before me equally and consider each case based on the individual and specific facts presented along with the applicable law. Pre-determinations based on hypothetical aggravating factors, extenuating circumstances, and mitigation matters are inappropriate.

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?

At all times, a judge should demonstrate the highest level of patience, dignity, respect, impartiality, courteous behavior, and temperance. Additionally, a judge should demonstrate a sense of humor and maintain a human touch.

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?

No. Anger from the judge is never appropriate.

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

Justin T. Williams

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

(Signature)

(Print Name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission Expires: _____