



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

Court, Position, and Seat # for which you are applying: Family Court, 8th Circuit, Seat #1

1. Name: Mr. Robert Wallis Cone

Name that you are known by if different from above
(Example: A Nickname): None.

Are you currently serving in some capacity as a judge? If part-time, please note.
(Includes Municipal, Magistrate, Etc.): Not currently serving.

Home Address: [Redacted]
County of Residence: Greenwood County

Business Address: 1118 Phoenix Street
Greenwood, SC 29646

E-Mail Address: [Redacted]
[Redacted]

Telephone Number: (home): [Redacted]
(office): 803-924-0787
(cell): [Redacted]

2. Place of Birth: Richmond, Virginia
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? If so, give the dates, branch of service, highest rank attained, serial number (if applicable), present status, and the character of your discharge or release. Please provide a copy of your DD214 concerning your discharge. Not applicable.

6. Family Status:
(a) State whether you are single, married, widowed, divorced, or separated.
Married.

- (b) If married, state the date of your marriage and your spouse's full name and occupation.

Married November 15, 2003 to Emily Willard Cone, Elementary School Teacher

- (c) If widowed, list the name(s) of spouse(s).
Not applicable.

- (d) If you have ever been divorced or are in the process of obtaining a divorce, state the date, name of the moving party, court, and grounds.

Not applicable.

- (e) State the names of your children and their ages. If your children are NOT full-time students, also include the occupation and employer of each child.

[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, School of Law. August, 1995 to May, 1998. JD degree.
 - b) Medical University of South Carolina, Fall semester, August to December, 1993. Dropped out of medical school due to poor performance and finding medicine did not best suit my talents.
 - c) Furman University, September 1989 through May, 1993. Bachelor of Arts, Political Science.

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.

University of South Carolina, School of Law:

- a) Palmetto Legal Society, member 1995-1998
- b) Christian Legal Society, member 1995-1998
- c) Intellectual Property Law Society, member 1996-1998
- d) Legal Writing Instructor, Professor Thomas Haggard, 1997-98.
- e) Law Clerk, Administrative Law Court, Staff Attorneys' office, 1996-1998.

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.

State of South Carolina, admitted 1998. Passed the South Carolina bar exam on first attempt.

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) McDonald, Patrick, Baggett, Poston, and Hemphill, L.L.P., 414 Main Street, Greenwood, South Carolina. Associate attorney.

From 1998 to 2002, my practice primarily involved insurance defense litigation in personal injury in automobile accident cases for several automobile insurance companies, medical malpractice cases for the Joint Underwriters Association, and tort cases filed against state agencies insured through the South Carolina Insurance Reserve Fund. I also handled all rule 608 appointed cases for the other 10 attorneys in the firm, including child abuse & neglect cases, post-conviction relief cases, and serving as guardian ad litem in juvenile justice and probate matters.

Due to the firm's changing client profile, expanded contact with clients in the business community and my Family Court experience. I began moving into paid representation of clients in Family Court matters in 2002. In addition, from 1998 to 2005 I also handled estate planning, probate matters, business formations, debt collection, and bankruptcy matters for business clients. I supervised one paralegal while employed with the firm, but did not manage its trust account.

- b) The Cone Law Firm, PC, 128 Maxwell Avenue, Greenwood, SC 29646, November 2005 to April 2012.

I opened my own law firm in 2005 and operated as a solo practitioner. My practice focused on family law and civil litigation. I also handled probate matters, bankruptcy cases, debt collection, business formations and estate planning. During this time, I became a contract attorney for the Department of Social Services, representing the agency in child welfare, abuse and neglect cases. During this time I also served as town attorney for the Town of McCormick, South Carolina. From 2008 to 2012, I also served part-time as the Municipal Court Judge for the Town of Ninety-Six, South Carolina. I served as the sole attorney, managing the firm's trust account and paralegal staff.

- c) South Carolina Department of Social Services, April 2012 to April 2016. Managing Attorney for Greenwood, Abbeville, and Newberry counties.

I became a full-time employee of the Department of Social Services and represented the agency in child welfare, abuse and neglect cases. I had an average caseload of 140 cases across three counties during that time. I handled contested trials on issues of physical

abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect of children and infants, termination of parental rights, as well as petitions for protective custody of vulnerable adults. I would also handle appeals of cases from these counties. I primarily operated in the Eighth Judicial Circuit but would conduct trials in other counties across the state when other agency attorneys were unavailable. I supervised two paralegals during this time.

- d) South Carolina Department of Social Services, April 2016 to July 2019. Regional Managing Attorney for the Second, Eighth, and Eleventh Judicial Circuits.

I was promoted to Regional Managing Attorney for the Department in 2016, supervising a legal staff of 7 attorneys and 8 paralegals across 11 counties. During my tenure the legal staff grew to 10 attorneys and 13 paralegals, plus three contract attorneys. I was responsible for the overall management of the Department's caseload across the 11 counties of the three Circuits. I handled all personnel matters, procurement, addressed specific case issues, conducted legal research, and handled high priority or complex legal cases in the counties. I also filled in as county attorney when there were vacancies or absences. I also maintained professional relationships between the Department and other participants in the Family Court system related to abuse and neglect cases, including judges, clerks of court, law enforcement, the Department of Juvenile Justice, guardians ad litem, and opposing counsel.

- e) South Carolina Department of Social Services, July 2019 to present. Assistant Managing Attorney for County Operations, Office of General Counsel.

In 2019 I was promoted to this position, managing all county legal operations across the state. In this position, I am responsible for developing and conducting training programs for agency attorneys, paralegals, and case management staff on issues pertaining to the Department's participation in the Family Court system. I also administer the agency's Legal Case Management software system and train users on its proper use. I serve as agency liaison to the state's Court Improvement Project and the Bench/Bar Committee on child welfare issues.

I have continued to provide county level management when there have been vacant positions. From 2020 to 2024, I have served as the county attorney for Barnwell County. I also assisted in Aiken County with trials and general legal services. From January to June 2024, I have served as interim Managing Attorney for Richland County DSS, and Interim Regional Managing Attorney for the DSS Midlands region, encompassing Aiken, Bamberg, Barnwell, Chester, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lancaster, Richland, Union and York Counties. In these roles, I was responsible docket management, staff recruitment, personnel management, staff training, legal research, policy implementation, case assignments and personally handling a caseload of approximately 130 cases in Richland County.

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. Please answer the following:

- (a) If you are a candidate for Family Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience within each of the following Family Court practice areas: divorce and equitable division of property, child custody, adoption, abuse and neglect, and juvenile justice. Include information about cases you have handled in each of these practice areas, or if you have not practiced in an area, describe how your background and procedural knowledge has prepared you to preside over such matters as a Family Court judge. Please also indicate the frequency of your appearances before a Family Court judge within the past five years.

From 1998 to 2012 when I became a full-time attorney for the state, I handled more than 200 private Family Court cases. I represented husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, and grandparents in cases involving divorce, equitable division of property, and child custody/child support. From 1998 – 2006, as an appointed attorney I represented parents against the Department of Social Services in child abuse and child neglect cases.

During my private practice, I served as a private Guardian ad litem in more than 40 cases, representing the interests of children in contested custody matters. I also represented 19 families in private adoption cases. I was appointed to represent juveniles as their Guardian ad Litem in a number of Juvenile Justice cases.

Beginning in 2006, I began representing the Department of Social Services as a contract attorney, handling child abuse, child neglect, adult abuse, and adult neglect cases. My contract initially covered Greenwood County, with Abbeville and Newberry counties added later. In addition to my private cases, I managing a caseload of 75-130 cases at any given time as part of my contract with the Department.

In April, 2012, I joined the Department of Social Services as a full time attorney. I continued to represent the Department in child abuse, child neglect, adult abuse, and adult neglect cases. These cases included sexual abuse, physical abuse, educational neglect, medical neglect, adult abuse/neglect, termination of parental rights actions and appeals. From 2012 to 2016, my average active caseload was 130 cases at any given time spread across three counties.

In 2016, I was promoted into a managerial role across additional counties, culminating in state-wide responsibility today. In these roles, I am often called upon to assist in complex cases. Such cases include a wide variety of issues. Some examples would be: contested adoptions where current or former foster parents intervene in abuse cases contesting placement of children with relatives versus foster families, cases involving children who are foreign nationals, interstate and international jurisdiction issues regarding custody of children, addressing the needs of foster children who also have open cases with the Department of Juvenile Justice, and cases involving children with complex mental health or behavioral issues requiring special treatment or management. I also continue to represent the Department in trials in numerous counties, appearing in court, evaluating cases for

litigation, and training new attorneys. I also work with the Department of Social Services, Department of Children's Advocacy, Judicial Department, and Children's Law Center of the University of South Carolina to develop policies, programs, training materials, and procedures to improve the practice of child welfare law in South Carolina.

- (b) If you are a candidate for Circuit Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience in criminal matters, including any cases handled over the past five years, and include a brief description of the issues involved. Further, please provide a brief written description of your experience in civil matters, including any cases handled over the past five years, and include a brief description of the types of matters handled, issues involved, and procedural history. Please include information such as the primary areas in civil court in which you practice, and whether you represent plaintiffs or defendants, or both. You may go back further than five years if you feel it would assist the Commission with its assessment of your experience. If you lack experience in an area, describe how your background and procedural knowledge has prepared you to preside over such matters as a Circuit Court judge, or how you would compensate for your lack of experience in this area. Please also indicate the frequency of your appearances before a Circuit Court judge within the past five years.
 - (c) If you are a candidate for Master-In-Equity, please provide a brief written description of your experience in the Master's court, including any cases handled over the past five years, and include a brief description of the issues involved. Please include the frequency of your appearances before a Master-In-Equity or a Circuit Court judge within the past five years.
 - (d) If you are a candidate for Administrative Law Court, please provide a brief written description of your experience before an Administrative Law Judge, including any issues discussed and the frequency of your appearances before the Administrative Law or Circuit Court within the past five years.
12. What was the frequency of your court appearances during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench?
- (a) federal:
 - (b) state: I appear in Family Court anywhere from 1 to 4 days per week, every week excluding holidays.
13. What percentage of your practice involved civil, criminal, domestic, and other matters during the past five years or in the five years prior to your election to the bench?
- (a) civil: 1% (Probate matters relating to vulnerable adults or mental health cases.)
 - (b) criminal: 3% (Cases involving the Department of Juvenile Justice)
 - (c) domestic: 96%
 - (d) other:

14. During the past five years
- (a) What percentage of your practice was in trial court, including cases that settled prior to trial? 100%
 - (b) What number of cases went to trial and resulted in a verdict? 110 (estimated)
 - (c) What number of cases went to trial and resolved after the plaintiff's or State's case? (Resolved may include settlement, plea, by Judge's order during a motion hearing, etc. < 25
 - (d) What number of your cases settled after a jury was selected but prior to opening statements? Not applicable

During the past five years, did you most often serve as sole counsel, chief counsel, or co-counsel?

With the exception of cases where I was training a new attorney, I generally served as sole counsel.

For sitting judges seeking a judgeship different than your current position, During the five years prior to your election to the bench, what percentage of your practice was in trial court, including matters that settled prior to trial?

15. List five of the most significant litigated matters you have personally handled in either trial or appellate court, or before a state or federal agency. Give citations if the cases were reported and describe why these matters were significant.

- (a) Burton v. Molen, 2008-DR-01-35 (Abbeville County).

This is a case where I represented the biological father in a custody dispute. The child in question was three years old when the mother left South Carolina without warning and took the child to Texas. Over a period of nearly 2 years, we engaged in complex legal proceedings, with hearings in both South Carolina and Texas, to try and return the child to South Carolina. While the case was on appeal, we were able to negotiate a settlement that resulted in joint custody for my client. This was one of the most challenging cases of my legal career, involving multiple hearings in more than one jurisdiction, and working with agencies such as the FBI, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

- (b) SCDSS vs. Sharpe, et al. 2007-DR-01-190; 2012-DR-01-46 (Abbeville County)

This was a contested termination of parental rights action where the minor children had been victims of sexual abuse, and because of many procedural delays, the minor children had been in foster care for nearly 5 years without a resolution. A particular challenge was the mother's continued participation in some treatment efforts and regular contact with the children, but this had to be considered in the context that she remained in contact with the children's abuser. After a lengthy trial, we were successful in having the parents' rights to the children terminated, making them free for adoption.

(c) Carter v. Hayford, 2006-DR-24-583 (Greenwood County).

This was a case where I served as the Guardian ad litem for a young girl whose parents had been divorced for several years. The mother had remarried, and was seeking to relocate with the child to the state of Kentucky. The father opposed the move and sought a change of custody. Ultimately, we were able to resolve the case on the eve of trial and established a visitation plan that allowed the child to move, but still gave father substantial visitation throughout the year. This case was significant to me because of the challenge involved in choosing between two good parents, both of whom were deeply involved in the child's life.

(d) SCDSS v. Williams, 2019-DR-06-228, 2022-DR-06-0147, 2023-DR-06-93 (Barnwell County)

I handled multiple related cases regarding the mother of two children, I.W. and I.W.2, both placed in DSS custody at birth. The mother had multiple cases with SCDSS over the years, but had also left the state for extended periods of time. She had her parental rights terminated to another child after the birth of I.W. While I.W.'s case was progressing, the mother became pregnant again, and I.W.2 was born and immediately taken into protective custody while the termination of parental rights action was pending for I.W.

I chose this case because it is a classic example of situations we see regularly in SCDSS. We had a mother with uncontrolled mental health and substance abuse issues, chronic unemployment, frequent homelessness, and her children tested positive for illegal drugs at birth. The mother would engage in services to try and address her problems for short periods of time, but could not maintain any progress, even when provided intensive inpatient treatment for her mental health and substance abuse issues.

The children were placed in pre-adoptive homes fairly quickly, but the process of terminating the mother's parental rights and making the children free to be adopted was delayed multiple times due to complications such as: I.W.'s alleged father lived in Maryland, and it took several months to locate him, only succeeding after serving him by publication. After service, he requested placement of I.W., but it then took several months to have him participate in a paternity test, which ultimately determined he was not the father. After these procedural issues were resolved, the case was continued more than once due to the mother being hospitalized on the eve of trials, in a county that only has DSS court 3 hours per month, and one of the resident judges had represented the mother in a case prior to becoming a judge, so the hearings could only be set when another judge would be holding court.

Unfortunately, this is not the only case with this many complications I've dealt with during my time representing SCDSS. I am the first to agree that it should not be easy to end the parent-child relationship, and that the rights of parents must be respected and protected. However, it was also damaging to these children to have to wait so long to achieve permanency. When I.W.2 was born, we were able to take the case directly to termination of parental rights, so this child's situation was resolved more quickly, but the problem of getting cases moved timely through our existing system persists, and finding the balance of

protecting parents' rights versus the best interests of the children is a never-ending challenge.

(e) SCDSS v. Chisolm 2019-DR-02-758 (Aiken County)

This case is significant because it represents for me another example of the complex issues that arise in SCDSS cases. In this case, the child, Z.S., initially came into DSS custody at the age of 13 due to altercations between herself and her mother that included physical violence. As the case progressed, it was determined that the child's behavior was the major contributing factor in the altercations. She would engage in sexual activity with adult men in exchange for money or gifts, sometimes bringing the men to her mother's home where her younger siblings resided. This led to mother and Z.S.'s frequent fights.

Mother attempted to work with SCDSS and Z.S. to address the situation. Over the years, Z.S. continued to run away from her foster homes, would assault foster family members, SCDSS staff, and relatives. She would engage in property damage and had multiple criminal charges with the Department of Juvenile Justice during this time. Even placements in psychiatric residential treatment facilities and other intensive mental health services did not resolve her behaviors. She received residential treatment at a program specifically designed to address the needs of children who are victims of sex trafficking, but she would run away from the facility and return to the streets. SCDSS would try to return her home with in-home services, hoping her behaviors would improve in a family setting, but eventually the same problems would re-occur.

I was involved for two years on this case, working with SCDSS staff, Department of Mental Health, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Children's Advocacy, the Guardian ad Litem program, and the Family Court for multiple hearings trying to find a solution that would get Z.S. the care she needed and keep her safe. Her continued running away made it difficult to get treatment started, as we would have to wait until she was located, sometimes months later, to find a new foster care facility that would take her, then get services started. Often, by the time all this was done, she would run again.

Unfortunately, this case does not have a happy ending, and I don't consider it a success of any kind. Z.S. turned 18 last year and left SCDSS custody, refusing to sign a voluntary placement agreement. I have learned she's been arrested on various charges since leaving SCDSS. I chose this case because it is another example of the challenges Family Court and the child welfare system in general are dealing with when it comes to children with special needs, mental health needs, behavioral problems, etc.

16. List up to five civil appeals you have personally handled. Give the case name, the court, the date of decision, and the citation if the case was reported.
 - (a) Joubert v. South Carolina Department of Social Services, 341 S.C. 176, 534 S.E.2d 1 (Ct. App. 2000)
 - (b) Allegiant v. Emerald Inns, Inc., 2007-UP-325, Court of Appeals, 2007.

- (c) South Carolina Dept. of Social Services v. Driggers, 2015-UP-038, Court of Appeals, 2015.
- (d) South Carolina Dept. of Social Services v. Gary, 2006-UP-288, Court of Appeals, 2006.
- (e) South Carolina Dept. of Social Services v. May, 2017-UP-447, Court of Appeals, 2017.

17. List up to five criminal appeals you have personally handled. Give the case name, the court, the date of decision and the citation if the case was reported.
None.

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.

I served part-time as the Municipal Judge for the Town of Ninety-Six, South Carolina from October, 2008 to January, 2013. I was appointed to the position by the Town Council. The court handled traffic violations, town ordinance violations, bond hearings for all persons arrested by the Town's police department, and misdemeanor criminal matters within the town limits. I also issued search warrants, arrest warrants, and conducted preliminary hearings in criminal matters for the Town, whether misdemeanors or felonies

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.

Municipal Courts are summary courts, and the only written orders issued were bond orders or custody orders. I occasionally issued an order committing a defendant to a Pre-Trial Intervention or similar diversion program, but these were form orders provided by the Solicitor's office.

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.

- a) Admitted to practice before the State Courts of South Carolina in 1998.
- b) Admitted to practice before the Federal District Court and Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2000.

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.

- a) I present a CLE on Federal Laws impacting the child welfare system in S.C. in 2023 for SCDSS attorneys.

- b) I have presented at CLEs for the Department of Social Services' new attorneys boot camp on the roles and responsibilities of agency attorneys in annually from 2017 to the present.
 - c) I have presented at a CLE on "Effective Advocacy in Termination of Parental Rights Proceedings" in February, 2017.
 - d) In September, 2013 and 2014, I presented a CLE on Abuse and Neglect cases for attorneys and volunteer guardians ad litem in Greenwood and Abbeville counties.
 - e) I have taught the course on "Consumer Law and Debt Collection in South Carolina" for the South Carolina Bar's Law School for Nonlawyers at Piedmont Technical College in Greenwood, South Carolina in 2007, 2008, and 2011.
 - f) I presented a seminar on "Mechanic's Liens and Collections in South Carolina", Greenwood Home Builders Association. January, 2002
 - g) I presented a seminar on "The Church Under Fire, Youth Ministry and the Law" Greater Greenwood Youth Ministries (GYM), October, 2003.
 - h) I presented a seminar on "Sexual Harassment and Schools", Ninety-Six Primary School Faculty, September, 2005.
 - i) I taught a class on Business Law at Lander University during the Fall Semester of 2000.
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.)

See attached Final Brief of Appellant in Joubert v. SCDSS et al. 341 S.C. 176, 534 S.E.2d 1 (Ct. App. 2000). Also attached is a Memorandum in support of a Motion to Dismiss filed in SCDSS v. McCane et al. 2024-DR-40-1488.
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.

I am not subscribed to any rating service.

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) Greenwood County 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.

I served as the Town Attorney for the Town of McCormick, South Carolina from 1999 to 2008. I was appointed to that position by the Town Council and reappointed on an annual basis. I ended my service when I was appointed Municipal Court Judge for the Town of Ninety-Six, SC. I filed all necessary State Ethics Commission reports.

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.

While municipal court judge, I was also working as the sole attorney in my private practice.

29. Have you ever been an unsuccessful candidate for elective, judicial, or other public office? If so, give details, including dates.
- a) In 2010, I ran for the office of Probate Judge for Greenwood County. After a contested primary in June, 2010, I was the Republican candidate for Probate Judge. I lost in the general election in November, 2010.
 - b) In 2012, I was a candidate for Family Court Judge, Eighth Judicial Circuit, Seat 3. I was found qualified, but not nominated for the position.
 - c) In 2019, I was a candidate for Family Court Judge, At-large, Seat #2. I was found qualified, but not nominated.
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) First Baptist Church of Greenwood, Greenwood, South Carolina. Interim Minister to Students, 1994-95. I was responsible for leading church-wide ministry program for students, age 11-18 and college students. I was also responsible for fundraising activities to support non-budgeted student activities and ministry projects.
- b) YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, Black Mountain, North Carolina. Associate Director of Conference Services, 1993-94; Assistant Conference Services Director (Audio-Visual), Summer 1992; Assistant Program Director, Summers 1990 and 1991.

I worked in a variety of positions at a conference center operated by YMCAs of the Southeast. I supervised teams of up to 15 college age workers to prepare meeting and convention facilities for use by diverse groups, including community, corporate, and church organizations.

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.

None.

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) the identity and value of all financial assets held, directly or indirectly, including, but not limited to, bank accounts, real estate, securities, trusts, investments, and other financial holdings; and
 - (b) the identity and amount of each liability owed, directly or indirectly, which is in excess of \$1,000, including, but not limited to, debts, mortgages, loans, and other financial obligations.

(A net worth statement form is provided with this questionnaire and you must use this format for submission of your financial statement.)

NOTE: The Commission may require written confirmation that financial obligations have been satisfied or that the parties have agreed upon a payment schedule.

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?

None.

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.

None.

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;

- (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
- (c) which was sold, leased, or rented to a state or local public agency in South Carolina.

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;
- (b) nature and value of any public improvements; and
- (c) South Carolina state or local public agency which purchased or is leasing or renting such property.

Attach a copy of any contract or agreement.

None.

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.

Not applicable.

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.

Not applicable.

44. For sitting judges, have you used the services of your staff, for which you did not pay, while campaigning for this office?

Not applicable.

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.

I did receive a traffic ticket in 2021 for having an expired tag due to failure to timely pay property taxes on my vehicle. I paid a fine of \$155 in addition to the penalty for late filing.

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.

I have not been personally sued. During my last application for Family Court, I found that there was a federal lawsuit against a Robert W. Cone filed in the Federal Court for the District of South Carolina under Docket No. 3:13-cv-03167-JFA. However, the Robert W Cone referenced in that suit is not me. He was a now deceased US Army General who was commanding Fort Jackson at the time of the suit's filing.

There are two other actions filed in Greenwood County that appear to be suits against me individually, but are not. A lis pendens was filed against Lynn Arahill, under file number 2007LP2460115. I had been appointed as guardian ad litem for Ms. Arahill by the Probate Court and was named in that capacity. In addition, my name appears as a Plaintiff in an action for ejectment in 2004, however, that is an error. I was the attorney for the Plaintiff in this case, but it is indexed incorrectly by the Magistrate's Court.

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.

Not applicable.

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? If so, give the details and the resolution. Has your name ever been enrolled on the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect? If so, give the details.

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.

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, I am familiar with the rule.

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. Also, provide the Commission with **original letters** of recommendation from each person listed herein, including their signature (preferably in blue ink). **The Commission will not accept a photocopy or electronic submission of a letter of recommendation and failure to include all five (5) original letters of recommendation in your packet when you submit it will render your packet incomplete.** Please **do not** have references mail your reference letters to the Commission directly. *You must return the five (5) original letters of recommendation to the Commission with your application.*

(a) Dennis Gmerek, [Redacted]

(b) Laura Bardsley, [Redacted]

- (c) Adam Bacot, [Redacted]
- (d) Rebecca Farmer, [Redacted]
- (e) Rodney Stone, [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.

- a) Facebook/Instagram: [Redacted]
- b) Snapchat: [Redacted]
- c) Twitter: [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?

I rarely ever post anything on these sites. I use them to keep up with friends and family or the members of my boy scout troop that primarily use Snapchat. I find social media is not generally a positive environment, and believe people share too much on social media. Given my minimal use of these platforms at present, I don't think I would be much affected by election as a judge, but I would probably deactivate most or all of my accounts for privacy and safety reasons.

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.

- (a) Cub Scout Pack 921, Greenwood SC. Den Leader 2014-2015; Cubmaster 2016-2019.
- (b) Boy Scout Troop 313, Greenwood, SC. 2019 – present; Scoutmaster 2022 – Present.
- (c) F3 Men's Fitness Club, 2015 – present.
- (d) Greenwood County Library Board. Chairman, 2014-2016.

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.

Throughout my life, I have had a strong desire to serve and help people. I once considered careers in ministry and later, in medicine, but found that my skills and abilities were best suited for the practice of law. Over the years, I have seen the tremendous impact the court system can have on families. I think I was drawn to family law because you can have a real impact on the lives of families and individuals in the decisions you make in cases you pursue in family court. Family law has given me great personal satisfaction, helping individuals and families deal with some of the most tumultuous events of their lives.

In recent years, serving the state as an advocate for child welfare, I have seen the critical role Family Court judges have to make each day. Most decisions they are called upon to make will have life-long impacts on families and their children, but they are forced to make those decisions in a limited span of time and without complete information. While a prestigious post, Family Court judges are required to work at a demanding pace, week-in and week-out. At the same time, it promotes injustice and causes harm to children and families when decisions are left "in abeyance" or "under advisement" for prolonged periods of time, leaving children and families in limbo as to their future.

Based on these experiences, I have come to believe that, as a judge, it is crucial that you listen carefully to the evidence presented to you, consider the facts and the law, and then decide as quickly as possible. After 26 years of law practice, I believe more than ever in the old axiom, "Justice delayed is justice denied." Particularly in family court cases, it is crucial that children and families know what the outcome of their cases will be as quickly as possible, as uncertainty or delay only exacerbates the stresses caused by domestic litigation. Children lingering in the foster care system, juvenile offenders forced to wait for treatment or rehabilitative services, or adoptive parents who must sometimes wait years for their adoption to be finalized and their family made whole, are just a few examples of how delayed decisions cause real harm when it comes to families and children.

I have dealt with many complex cases that involve every aspect of a family's life that can go wrong. I have dealt with issues of all types, from physical abuse, domestic violence, sex trafficking, illegal immigration, international issues in family law, and the vast complexities that our child welfare, juvenile criminal, mental health, and financial support services face in trying to meet the needs of families and children in crisis. I've also worked with couples in divorce, facing the challenges that come with dividing up a life, from property to pets to children. I have the great pleasure of assisting families grow through adoption, and I have forever ended families by terminating parents' parental rights. Because of my wide range of experience, I am the person many DSS attorneys and other staff go to for advice when facing unusual or complex situations. While I will never say I've seen it all, I can say with confidence that I have seen more than most. Many family court attorneys handling routine divorce or custody actions will never develop the range of skills and body of knowledge I have over the past decades.

I would hope that my experience would allow me to resolve cases quickly, fairly, and with wisdom and courtesy for all the parties and attorneys. That is how I have tried to conduct myself in my practice, and how I plan to continue as a judge. That, plus my many years of experience make me an excellent candidate for the Family Court.

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: _____