



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

Family Court
(Incumbent)

Full Name: Coreen Barbara Khoury

Business Address: Post Office Box 1809, Lancaster, SC 29721

Business Telephone: 803-416-9799

1. Why do you want to serve another term as a Family Court judge?

I believe that I possess the experience, knowledge and skill set to be an effective Family Court Judge and serve the general and legal communities in South Carolina.

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

Yes, I plan to serve a full term if re-elected.

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

If I am re-elected, I will not return to private practice.

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

Yes, I have met the statutory requirements for this position.

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

I do not initiate, permit or consider *ex parte* communication unless permitted by the Judicial Code of Conduct or authorized by law. *Ex parte* communications and action may be necessary when they involve the health or safety of a child or litigant and prompt opportunity to be heard on the matter is provided to all parties.

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?

According to the Code of Judicial Conduct, the test for appearance of impropriety is whether the conduct would create in reasonable minds a perception that a judge's ability to carry out his/her judicial responsibilities with integrity, impartiality and competence is impaired. I would grant the motion and recuse myself even if I did not believe the disclosure would prejudice my impartiality. If my impartiality is questioned or some disclosure had the appearance of bias, I believe the best policy is to grant the motion for recusal.

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

I would disclose the financial or social involvement of my spouse or close relative. I would leave the courtroom to allow the parties to discuss the disclosure with their attorneys. I would recuse myself from hearing the matter unless the litigants and their attorneys agree to waive my disqualification on the record.

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

I do not accept gifts or social hospitality unless allowed pursuant to Canon 4D(5) a-i of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

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 am required to take appropriate action if I become aware of the misconduct or appearance of infirmity of a lawyer or judge. Appropriate action would include direct communication with the lawyer or judge, direct action if available and reporting the violation to the appropriate authority or agency if required.

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

In the past, I have assisted with fundraisers for parent-teacher organizations (PTO), youth baseball organizations, United Way and

Boy Scouts of America. Since becoming a judge in 2014, I have not engaged in any fund-raising activities.

11. Do you have any business activities that you have remained involved with since your election to the bench?

I do not have any business activities that I have remained involved with since my election to the bench.

12. Since Family Court judges do not have law clerks, how do you handle the drafting of orders?

I regularly draft bench orders, Pro Se orders and occasionally draft orders from lengthy and/or complex hearings. In most cases involving litigants represented by attorneys, I draft a memorandum of instructions outlining the findings of fact and conclusions of law. This memorandum is distributed to all parties with a request that one of the attorneys prepare a draft Order. This draft Order is distributed to all parties for modifications, corrections or additions. Once I receive the circulated order, I review it for accuracy and conformity with my original memorandum of instructions. If the Order complies with my original memorandum, I will sign and file the Order with the Clerk of Court for disbursement to all parties.

13. What methods do you use to ensure that you and your staff meet deadlines?

We use a folder/calendaring system that alerts us to approaching deadlines. We are also required to submit Matters Under Advisement reports to Court Administration alerting them to any unsigned orders over 30 days. As deadlines approach, my AA alerts attorneys as to due dates and methods for submitting Orders for my review and signature. If my AA receives no response, I will contact all attorneys/pro se litigants and advise of SC Family Court Rule 26 which requires orders in domestic relations matters to be submitted within 30 days of the hearing and Court Administration's requirement of listing attorneys names on all MUA reports.

14. What specific actions or steps do you take to ensure that the guidelines of the guardian ad litem statutes are followed during the pendency of a case?

I appoint guardians who are well trained, experienced and familiar with the requirements of the guardian ad litem statutes. I usually appoint attorneys as guardians. An attorney guardian understands his/her role and its limitations, knows the factors judges consider in custody decisions and can effectively communicate with children, litigants, attorneys and the Court. I also depend on the attorneys to file appropriate motions if they believe the guidelines of the statute are not being followed by the appointed guardian ad litem. I handle all motions as promptly as possible.

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

Judges are charged with interpreting the law and applying the law to the facts of a case. Judges are not charged with making laws or promoting public policies. However, judges are in a unique position to observe how the application of outdated laws or policies can create adverse consequences for litigants. I believe judges can be valuable resources of information and experiences to groups charged with promoting and drafting new laws or policies or discontinuing archaic laws or policies.

16. 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 have no planned activities but would do whatever I was called upon to do to improve the law, legal system and administration of justice. Each day I attempt to promote a positive image for the legal system by being diligent in the handling of my assigned docket, being courteous to all family court personnel and litigants, attentively listening to all parties and rendering decisions in accordance with the statutory and common law of this State.

17. 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?

I have served as a family court lawyer or judge for thirty-nine years in a relatively small community. The pressures associated with both jobs have not interfered with my personal relationships with family or friends. Over the years, I have tried very hard to leave work

matters at work and home matters at home. Family, friends, clients and attorneys have done a great job of understanding and honoring these boundaries.

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

I am not involved in any active investments in which I derive additional income that would impair my appearance of impartiality.

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

I am not required by the Code of Judicial Conduct to recuse myself from hearing a matter where I or a family member has a *de minimis* financial interest in a party involved. However, I would disclose the *de minimis* financial interest to the parties. If any party questioned my ability to handle the matter fairly and without bias or prejudice, I would recuse myself from hearing the matter.

20. 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.

I am not a member of any organization or association that prohibits or limits membership on the basis of race, sex, religion or national origin.

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

I have met the mandatory continuing legal education course requirement for the past reporting period.

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

A judge must avoid all impropriety and any appearance of impropriety. A judge should set the tone of the courtroom by being courteous, calm and in control. A judge should treat all lawyers, litigants, other courtroom participants and courthouse personnel with

respect. A judge must be fair and impartial in his/her rulings. A judge should be attentive to all matters before him/her. All rules apply both inside and outside of the courtroom.

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 a pro se litigant?

There may be occasions when it is appropriate to be angry with a person making an appearance in Court, a pro se litigant or attorney. It would not be appropriate, however, for this anger to influence a judicial decision.

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

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

(Signature)

(Print name)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My commission expires: _____