



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

Court, Position, and Seat # for which you are applying:

Family Court, Fourth Judicial Circuit, Seat 2

1. Name: Mr. C. Heath Ruffner

Name that you are known by if different from above
(Example: A Nickname):

Are you currently serving in some capacity as a judge? No. If part-time, please note. (Includes Municipal, Magistrate, Etc.)

Home Address: [Redacted]

County of Residence: Chesterfield

Business Address: 222 Market Street
Post Office Drawer 1449
Cheraw, South Carolina 29520

E-Mail Address: [Redacted]

Telephone Number: (home): [Redacted]
(office): (843) 537-5204
(cell): [Redacted]

2. Date of Birth: [Redacted]1971
Place of Birth: Augusta, Georgia
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? No. 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.

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

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

Family status:

Married on October 4, 2003, to Christy Rabon Ruffner, who works as a Case Manager at CHESCO Services (Board of Disabilities and Special Needs).

Never divorced, two children, [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) Augusta College (now known as Augusta University) – I attended from August, 1989 to May, 1991, and earned no degree. I lived at home and worked during the evenings these first two years of undergraduate school before transferring to the University of South Carolina.
 - (b) University of South Carolina – I attended from August, 1991 to May, 1993, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a minor in Business Administration.
 - (c) University of South Carolina School of Law – I attended from August, 1993 to May, 1996, and earned a Juris Doctor degree.

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.
 - (a) Moot Court Bar
 - (b) Student Bar Association
 - (c) I worked at a law firm in Augusta, Georgia during the summer between my second and third year, a good portion of which was spent assisting lawyers in the firm with domestic relations and juvenile justice matters.
 - (d) I participated in an internship with the Richland County Public Defender's Office Juvenile Justice Program during my third year of law school.

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.

- (a) I was admitted to the State Bar of Georgia in 1996, and took the bar exam while in my third year of law school. My status with the Georgia Bar is inactive and I have never practiced in that state. I took the bar exam once.
- (b) I was admitted to the State Bar of South Carolina in 1996. I took the bar exam once.
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) Upon graduation from law school in 1996, I served as Law Clerk to the Honorable Paul M. Burch, Circuit Court Judge for the Fourth Judicial Circuit, from August, 1996 to July, 1998.
- (b) After finishing my judicial clerkship, I accepted a position as an Assistant Solicitor for the Fourth Judicial Circuit and County Attorney for Chesterfield County. I served as an Assistant Solicitor until December, 1998. During my brief period as an Assistant Solicitor, I prosecuted various crimes in General Sessions, Family and Summary Courts, including burglaries, thefts, assaults and drug offenses.
- (c) I have served as Chesterfield County Attorney from July, 1998, through the present. I have represented the County as well as various elected and appointed officials in litigation in Circuit Court, Administrative Law Court and federal court. I also routinely draft ordinances, review and draft various other documents, participate in the negotiation and formulation of economic development agreements, and provide legal advice and counsel to the County Council, the County Administrator, county departments, boards, and commissions.
- (d) In 1999, I accepted a position as an associate with Harris and McLeod, a law firm in Cheraw, South Carolina, and became a partner in 2001. The firm is now known as McLeod and Ruffner and has been in continuous operation since the 1960's. The firm consists of my law partner and I, one associate attorney, and a staff of four. The name of the firm has changed as partners retired or departed to pursue other endeavors (prior firm names are Spruill and Harris; Harris and Griggs; Harris, Griggs and Spruill; Griggs and Spruill; Griggs, Spruill and Harris; Griggs and Harris; Harris and McLeod; and Harris, McLeod and Ruffner).

At my present firm, I have prosecuted municipal court cases for the Town of Cheraw including DUI, disorderly conduct and traffic offenses.

My practice has included domestic relations, civil (representing both plaintiffs and defendants), real estate, representation of local government, business work and criminal practice. I practice actively in Family Court and Circuit Court, occasionally in Summary Court, and I have in a few instances handled appellate work.

Since I began private practice, a significant portion of my work has always been devoted to litigation. This has included a diverse practice in Circuit and Family Courts consisting of representation of criminal defendants including three capital cases; plaintiffs and defendants in serious personal injury and other disputes; husbands/fathers and wives/mothers in divorce, equitable division, custody, child support and adoptions; individuals seeking name changes; grandparents seeking visitation; defendants in DSS abuse and neglect cases; volunteer guardians ad litem in DSS abuse and neglect cases (children and vulnerable adults); prosecution and defense of juveniles; and service as guardian ad litem in private custody and adoption cases.

While I was sporadically appointed as a special referee during the first 20 or so years of practice, I have been appointed very frequently in the past five years (I would estimate at least 30 to 40 cases per year). The cases over which I have presided have ranged from routine foreclosures to fairly complex property and other civil matters.

With regard to administrative and financial management, I serve as the Plan Administrator for my firm's retirement plan, manage the application for and acquisition of errors and omissions insurance, and, due to the small size of our firm, I am involved in all personnel, financial and any other significant decisions. My law partner and I are the only individuals authorized to sign checks and authorize withdrawals from the firm's two trust accounts, one exclusively for real estate transactions and another, at a separate bank, for all other matters. Both trust accounts are reconciled each month within no more than a few days of the end of the prior month by our firm's bookkeeper, who has no check signing authority on any of the firm's bank accounts, and those reconciliations are reviewed by the two partners.

- (e) From the early 2000's to the present, I have served as the county attorney in Chesterfield for the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program representing guardians ad litem for children in abuse and neglect cases. In 2007, I was contracted in the same role for the South Carolina Adult Guardian Ad Litem Program for vulnerable adult cases.
- (f) As of June 20, 2024, I was appointed as a Special Assistant Solicitor on a volunteer basis for the purpose of prosecuting cases involving juveniles in the Family Court of the Fourth Judicial Circuit. This is one area of practice in which I have been least active and, therefore, I sought this appointment to gain some meaningful experience in this critical area.

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.

My practice in Family Court has included virtually every type of case one could encounter. I have handled numerous private cases involving contested issues of divorce, equitable division, custody, child support and alimony. The marital estates in some of these cases were sizeable and required the assistance of experts to, for example, value pension plans or real estate holdings. A number of cases involved closely held family businesses. On the other hand, marital estates in other cases were quite modest, and the significant issues were, for example, the division of debt or sale of a marital home that the parties could no longer afford. I often found the latter cases more difficult, from a practical standpoint, than the "high value" cases because of the substantial effect it was going to have on the litigant's financial well-being especially when children were involved.

I have been involved in some bitterly contested custody cases. While I always advocated my client's position, the longer I practiced, I made an effort to encourage clients to try to see beyond the immediate stress and emotion of the litigation, and look at the long term, big picture of continuing to be a parent to their child; by necessity, this requires at least some minimal working relationship with the other parent. At this point, I have practiced long enough that I have been able to ask former clients about the upbringing of children and relationships with former spouses, and I have found that many did, in fact, learn to get along to serve their children's best interests.

I have handled a handful of adoptions over the years and have served as guardian ad litem for prospective adoptees. Without a doubt, this is one of the most rewarding parts of domestic practice and I can understand why Family Court judges, in my experience, enjoy presiding over these cases.

Early in my career, I represented defendant parents in a number of abuse and neglect cases. I was then approached by the local Volunteer Guardian ad Litem Program in the early 2000's to serve as the attorney in Chesterfield County. I have served in hundreds of cases in this capacity and the dedication of the volunteer guardians ad litem never ceases to amaze me. While many of these cases are heart wrenching and frustrating, there are also those with positive outcomes that either see parents complete their treatment plans and reunite with their children, or see the children adopted into a stable, loving home. I have also served for the past seven years as the contract attorney for the Vulnerable Adult Guardian Ad Litem Program representing guardians ad litem for vulnerable adults in DSS abuse and neglect cases.

I was involved in the prosecution of a few DJJ cases during my brief time with the Fourth Circuit Solicitor's Office in 1998 and represented a limited number of juveniles charged with offenses during my first fifteen years of practice. However, I have not practiced much in that area recently. For that reason, I requested and the Fourth Circuit Solicitor kindly agreed to appoint me as a Special Assistant Solicitor, on a volunteer basis, to assist in the prosecution of juvenile cases. I also sought out a CLE presented by Family Court Judge David Guyton and Sixteenth Circuit Assistant Solicitor Ouida Dest which provided me with a comprehensive overview of the juvenile justice process in South Carolina. I anticipate getting more up to date and gaining some real-world experience as an Assistant Solicitor, as I believe juvenile justice is such an important part of serving on the Family Court bench.

During the past five years, I have appeared before a Family Court judge an average of two to three times per month.

- (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: None.
 - (b) state: Several times per month.

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: 30%
 - (b) criminal: 1%
 - (c) domestic: 25%
 - (d) other: 44%

14. During the past five years
- (a) What percentage of your practice was in trial court, including cases that settled prior to trial? 55%
 - (b) What number of cases went to trial and resulted in a verdict? I would estimate 40-50 including non-jury.
 - (c) What number of cases went to trial and resolved after the plaintiff's or State's case? Less than five.
(Resolved may include settlement, plea, by Judge's order during a motion hearing, etc.)
 - (d) What number of your cases settled after a jury was selected but prior to opening statements? None.

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

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?

Not applicable.

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) Janice Watkins Hyatt v. Willard Hyatt: I represented the wife in this divorce action arising out of a 17-year marriage. At issue were alimony and equitable division of a family business, heavy equipment and real property. The parties undertook extensive discovery and I engaged a number of experts on behalf of the plaintiff to determine valuations for various assets. One of the chief areas of contention between the parties was the wife's interest in the family business and heavy equipment associated with it. During a multi-day trial, I was able to show through tax returns, financial statements and witness testimony that the wife had contributed significantly to the growth and success of the business such that the court awarded her 50% interest in the equipment and other personal property associated with the business. The wife was also awarded a substantial interest in real property owned by the husband prior to the parties' marriage by presenting evidence that she had contributed to the improvement of the property during the duration of the marriage. The plaintiff was also

awarded alimony. The case involved multiple contempt actions against the husband for which the wife was awarded attorney's fees on one occasion.

After the court's final ruling, the defendant husband appealed. I filed an Application Lifting Automatic Stay on the basis that the defendant was continuing to use and, therefore, devalue, some of the personal property which my client had been awarded. The trial court granted the application and the defendant then filed a Petition for Supersedeas with the Court of Appeals to which I filed a Return on behalf of the plaintiff; the Court of Appeals denied the defendant's petition. Even during the pendency of the appeal, I had to file a contempt action due the defendant's failure to pay alimony and to deliver some of the items of personal property after denial of his supersedeas petition. After final briefs were filed by both parties and the matter was scheduled by the Court of Appeals, the parties were finally able to reach an agreement settling all matters.

This case was significant for two reasons. First, it involved a number of convoluted matters that took time and effort to ferret out through discovery and review of documents to be able to prove the substantial contributions of the wife to the marriage. It also required numerous court appearances for motions, a trial and then the response to the defendant's appeal. Second, the case was a test of perseverance for me and my client. While I respected and, to this day, still respect opposing counsel in the case, I am convinced that his client thought he could win the case through a battle of attrition. My client did not have access to the finances necessary to pay as the litigation progressed and, at times, I am certain she was ready to just give up and accept what, in my opinion, were some less than fair settlement offers from the defendant. In the end, she trusted my advice and we were able to resolve the case in a favorable manner.

(b) Sandi Teal Byrd v. Billy Joe Byrd, II: This case in which I represented the plaintiff wife arose out a 19-year marriage and involved issues of custody, child support, equitable division and alimony. From the temporary hearing and throughout much of the case, the parties contested every issue especially regarding custody and visitation matters concerning the children, ages 13 and 9. There was a contempt hearing at which the court held both parties in contempt as a result of an incident that occurred in the presence of the minor children. A guardian ad litem was appointed early on in the case, and did an excellent job investigating and representing the interests of the children. Through negotiation with the defendant's capable counsel, less than six months after the contempt hearing, we appeared before the same judge to approve a written settlement agreement which included a fair division of the marital estate and, more importantly, a shared custody agreement that all concerned agreed was in the best interests of the two children.

This case was significant because it highlighted that lawyers could, and should in my opinion, zealously represent their respective clients while maintaining a level of civility and courtesy with one another. In my experience in this and other cases, I feel that this manner of interaction between the lawyers often leads to a reduction in the animosity between the parties that tends to be magnified in domestic cases. That, in turn, resulted in the parties in this case setting aside their differences, even though they no longer wanted to be married, to the benefit of their children.

(c) South Carolina Department of Social Services v. Crawford: This child abuse and neglect case in which I represented the guardian ad litem for the three children is the worst I have encountered. The children, three brothers, who were adopted by their grandfather and step grandmother were subjected to horrific physical and psychological abuse. It included being beaten with a whip and garden hose which left permanent scarring, malnourishment and forcing the children to eat hot peppers as punishment, and providing no education while purportedly homeschooling the children. Even worse, one of the three children was locked in a shed behind the home and lived in inhumane conditions including having to use a bucket to relieve himself. He also was fitted with a shock collar which was used as punishment and, at times, his own brothers were made to activate on him. Fortunately, the children were removed from this awful situation and two of the three were successfully adopted. The third child transitioned through the foster care system into adulthood. The parents were charged and sentenced to prison time in General Sessions Court.

At this point in my career, I had been involved with DSS abuse and neglect cases for about 10 years and, although I been exposed to some terrible cases, this one reached a level of depravity I had never seen. I was also a relatively new father at the time of a two year old son and could not imagine anyone treating another human being, much less a child, this way. However, I also saw the utter resilience and strength that children possess to be able to overcome these circumstances. The case was also significant for the care I saw exhibited by the trial judge, a veteran of the bench, to make certain that these children were protected and had the best chance possible to succeed.

(d) South Carolina Department of Social Services – In the Interest of: T.B, T.B. and C.B.: I represented the guardian ad litem in this case which involved three children, two boys, ages nine and 11, and a girl, age 10. The rights of the parents had already been terminated and there was an issue as to the placement of the two boys with a prior foster mother and prospective adoptive home due to some statutory and/or policy requirements placed on DSS. One of the boys suffered from Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSD) resulting in him being hearing impaired. The boys' former foster mother had taken extraordinary efforts including hiring, at her own expense, someone to assist with the necessary documentation to gain admission for the child to the School for the Deaf and Blind. Again, due to some statutory and/or policy restrictions placed on DSS, the Department could not agree to placement of the boys with the former foster mother. I filed a motion for judicial review on behalf of the guardian and a hearing was held at which all five witnesses called, even the witness for DSS, agreed that it was in the best interests of the two boys to be placed back with their former foster mother. The Family Court judge agreed and issued an order placing the boys back with the former foster mother as an adoptive placement. The children were later adopted by the foster mother and, to this day, I have a picture of these two young men, happy to be in their forever home.

This case was significant because it is an example of “the system” working. Even though there were obstacles, everyone involved, including the court, the lawyers, the guardian ad litem and DSS staff, came together to make sure that what was in the children’s best interest was achieved.

(e) Barbara E. Funderburk v. Timothy M. Funderburk and James T. Funderburk: I represented the husband, Tim Funderburk, in this case which involved a number of contested issues arising out of a 20 year marriage: divorce based on the statutory fault ground of adultery and equitable division of the marital estate, including an allegation by the plaintiff that a 107 acre tract of property titled in the name of Tim Funderburk's brother, James T. Funderburk, was being held in trust for the plaintiff and defendant and should, therefore, be included in the marital estate. As a result, an Amended Complaint was filed adding James T. Funderburk as a party and he was represented by separate counsel in the case. The case included fairly extensive discovery, research and gathering of documentation regarding the issues of adultery and the disputed 107 acre tract in order to prepare for what would be a two day trial. The parties also had two children, one of whom was a son, age 12, and a daughter who had reached the age of majority. The parties had agreed upon joint custody of the son, with the father being the primary custodian. After trial, the court ruled in favor of my client on effectively every issue. A divorce was granted based on the plaintiff's adultery, the court found that the 107 acres were not part of the marital estate, and divided the marital property 60% to my client and 40% to the plaintiff.

This case was significant in that it was extremely contentious from the outset and involved a third party, my client's brother, whose property was at stake of being included for division in the marital estate. This necessitated additional and unique preparation for trial including coordination with my client's brother's counsel. My client and his brother were also very cooperative and accepting of advice, which certainly contributed to the positive outcome of the case.

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) Hyatt v. Hyatt, No. 01-DR-13-684 (S.C. Ct.App.) – Case settled during pendency of appeal.
 - (b) Hall v. Sapp, No. 07-6820 (4th Cir., filed November 28, 2007).
 - (c) Stutler v. South Carolina Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company, No. 2012-UP-529 (S.C. Ct.App., filed September 19, 2012).
 - (d) Teal v. Hickman-Tedder, No. 2015-UP-569, (S.C. Ct.App., filed December 23, 2015) – I represented Mary Elizabeth Hickman-Tedder, the named insured of one of the other respondents, and my role in the appeal process, including preparation of the brief, was limited to portions relevant to her interests.

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.
 - (a) State of South Carolina v. Aaron Carelock, No. 2002-UP-262, (S.C. Ct.App., filed April 9, 2002).

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.

No.

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.

Not applicable.

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) Georgia State Trial Courts, October 23, 1996
- (b) South Carolina, November 18, 1996
- (c) Federal District Court of South Carolina, December 28, 1999
- (d) Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, June 8, 2007

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.

As county attorney for the Volunteer Guardian ad Litem Program, I have provided in service training to volunteer guardians ad litem on investigating, drafting reports, testifying in court, etc. regarding DSS child abuse and neglect cases.

22. Provide, as a separate attachment, your continuing legal or judicial education report from the past five years.

Continuing education report from the past five years is 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.)

Two writing submissions are attached.

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.

Member of the Million Dollar and Multi-Million Dollar Advocates Forum.

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
- (b) Georgia Bar (Inactive status)
- (c) Chesterfield County Bar Association
- (d) South Carolina Association of County Attorneys

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.

No.

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.

Not applicable.

29. Have you ever been an unsuccessful candidate for elective, judicial, or other public office? If so, give details, including dates.

No.

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) During the summer of 1988, between my junior and senior years of high school, I worked at the Optical Lab of Georgia in Augusta, Georgia, where I assisted in many facets of the production of eye glasses and maintenance of machines used in that process.
 - (b) From June, 1989 until August, 1991, I worked as a claims processor for Travelers Insurance in Augusta, Georgia during evening hours while attending college full time.
 - (c) A former law partner and I operated an antiques business, Perfect Patina, LLC, from 2005 to 2010. The business was a small venture that was not profitable, and the LLC was dissolved in 2010. Tax returns were filed for each year the company operated.

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.

- (a) Chesterfield County Public Facilities Corporation – I was the Incorporator for this nonprofit corporation which was established in December, 2015, pursuant to a resolution of Chesterfield County Council for the purpose of constructing, acquiring and operating public buildings, as well as equipment and facilities functionally related thereto.
- (b) I am a 50% owner in my law firm, McLeod & Ruffner, a general partnership.

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.

A complete, current financial net worth statement was provided to the Commission.

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 at this time. I anticipate incurring expenses for postage, printing, copying and similar items, and will report those as required.

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.

Allen Blackmon – \$260.25
Cody Mitchell – \$500.00
Gerald Malloy – \$1,460.00
Vincent Sheheen – \$1,000.00
Richie Yow – \$500.00

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.

[All answers have been received and considered by the Commission, and as noted above, any expunged matters are redacted from the record.]

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.

(a) I have never been sued by a client.

(b) Lee v. Ruffner and Sigma Realty – In 2005, I was sued by a real estate agent concerning a commission dispute with another real estate agent involved in a transaction I handled. Although I offered to either hold the funds in my firm's trust account or issue a check payable to both parties until the dispute was resolved, action that was affirmed to be

correct in a letter from the Office of Disciplinary Counsel to the plaintiff/real estate agent, the real estate agent filed a pro se suit against me in Magistrate's Court. The action was removed to Circuit Court, I filed an interpleader action, the disputed funds were paid to the Clerk of Court, and I was dismissed from the suit. The Plaintiff, at that point represented by counsel, was sanctioned and required to pay my attorney's fees and costs totaling \$5,472.50, although my counsel had offered to accept a reduced amount prior to a decision by the court on that matter.

- (c) Lisenby v. Ruffner, Kiser, Parker and Chesterfield Sheriff's Department – In June, 2014, I, along with the Sheriff and former Sheriff, was named as a party by a pro se state inmate in an action seeking a writ of mandamus filed in the Court of Common Pleas for Chesterfield County. In its order dismissing the action, granting sanctions against the plaintiff, and granting injunctive relief to the defendants, the Circuit Court found that this action was the thirteenth attempt by the plaintiff to collaterally attack his criminal convictions arising from his 2008 trial. Additionally, the Court found that the plaintiff had violated the July 16, 2012, order of the South Carolina Supreme Court prohibiting him “from filing any further collateral actions in the circuit court challenging his convictions from 2008...without first obtaining permission to do so from this Court.”
- (d) Ruffner v. Kenny – In May, 2024, I filed a pro se Property Damage Arbitration Claim arising out of an automobile accident in which my son was driving a vehicle that I owned. That matter is currently pending.

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.

Yes, I have carried malpractice insurance since I began private practice. I have never been covered by a tail policy. My firm's current malpractice policy has limits of \$2,000,000.00 and a deductible of \$5,000.00.

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.

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) Jennifer Burch
Pee Dee Regional Director
Department of Children's Advocacy
Guardian ad Litem Program
[Redacted]

- (b) Honorable Roger E. Henderson (Retired Family and Circuit Court Judge)
[Redacted]
- (c) Chris Jackson, Esquire
Contract Attorney for DSS
[Redacted]
- (d) Reverend J. Ronald Thurman (Retired Chesterfield County Administrator)
[Redacted]
- (e) Elizabeth B. York, Esquire
[Redacted]

56. Are you active on or a member of a social media or Internet site such as, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, etc.?

If so, please list the account names for each account and the relevant platform.

How would your use of social media or other similar types of Internet sites be affected if you were serving in a judicial capacity?

Facebook – My account name is [Redacted]

- (a) The account is set to private and my only Facebook “friend” is my wife. I have never posted anything.
- (b) Instagram – I have two accounts on Instagram. One account name is [Redacted] and is set to private. Since May, 2015, I have a total of 55 posts to the account which consist of items such as family members, friends, vacations, and pets. The other account is [Redacted] and is set to public. Since September, 2023, I have a total of 10 posts, all of which concern cars, a hobby of mine.

Although, given the nature of my social media activity, I do not believe that my use of it would be affected if serving in a judicial capacity, I would certainly be sensitive to that issue and, if necessary, would delete accounts and/or refrain from posting on social media.

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) First United Methodist Church of Cheraw (past member of Finance and Staff-Parish Relations Committee)
- (b) Mt. Moriah Mason Lodge #58
- (c) Cheraw Chamber of Commerce (past board member and chair)
- (d) Pee Dee Land Trust (past board member and treasurer)
- (e) Cheravian Club (local service club) (charter and past board member)

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.

I believe the diversity of my 26 plus years of practice, not only in Family Court but also in Circuit Court and other areas not necessarily litigation related, have prepared me to be a capable Family Court judge. I have learned to deal with a variety of people in any number of demanding situations, be it in the midst of a trial, during a county council meeting, or negotiating settlement of a real estate matter. At age 52, my life experience has also been significant such that it will allow me to relate to and objectively see the different views of the parties to a case.

On a personal note, my parents divorced when I was 10 years old. While this was a difficult time, as I have looked back, particularly after having children of my own, I realized that neither of my parents, not once, let the fact that they were no longer married interfere with their love and encouragement of me, individually and collectively. A few years later, both of my parents remarried within a year of one another. Although admittedly, at the time, I was not thrilled to be getting a stepfather and a stepmother, over time, I appreciated that I had now been blessed with four parents who all loved me, supported me, and helped me grow up, and I became very close with my stepparents. Each of my parents had a daughter as a result of their second marriage so I also got the joy of having two sisters after being an only child. My stepfather has since passed away and I miss him dearly. My stepmother remains an integral part of my and my family's life. While I know not all situations will turn out like mine, this experience is something I can lean on to be empathetic to parents and children when they are in the middle of a dispute in Family Court, and perhaps allow me to offer some reassurance and wisdom to them.

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: _____
C. Heath Ruffner

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

(Notary Signature)

(Notary Printed Name)

Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission Expires: _____