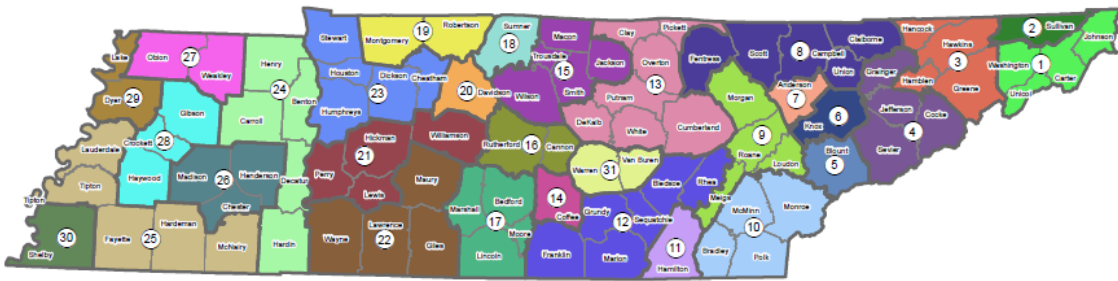
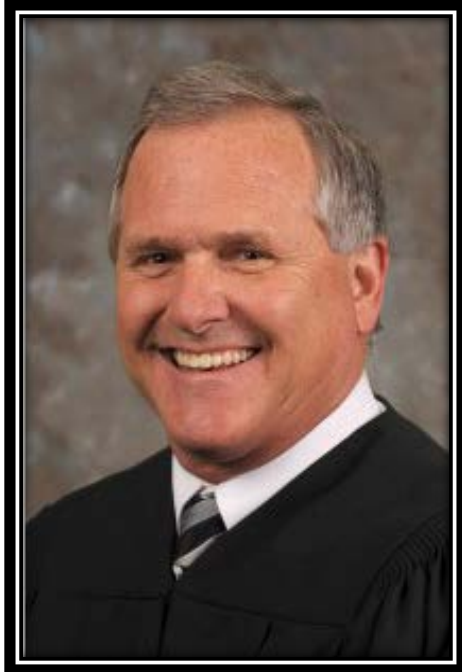


# ADVISORY TASK FORCE ON COMPOSITION OF JUDICIAL DISTRICTS



## MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES



## **TELFORD E. FORGETY, JR., CHAIR**

Chancellor  
4th and 5th Judicial Districts

Telford E. Forgety, Jr., has served as Chancellor since October 1997. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Carson-Newman College (Jefferson City, Tennessee) and his J.D. from the Memphis State University School of Law (Memphis, Tennessee). He was in private practice in the firm of Rainwater, Forgety, and Jones, Dandridge, Tennessee, from 1976 to 1997. He served as Law Clerk to Judge James Parrott of the Eastern Section Court of Appeals from 1975 to 1976. During his private practice, Chancellor Forgety tried hundreds of cases at all levels and appeared before the appellate courts—Court of Appeals, Court of Criminal Appeals, and Supreme Court—some thirty times. He served two terms as President of the Tennessee Trial Judges' Association and has held multiple offices in the Tennessee Judicial Conference. He also

served on the Appellate Court Evaluation Committee (evaluating Tennessee's Appellate Judges), and on the Tennessee Supreme Court's Worker's Compensation Panel. In 2017, Chancellor Forgety served as Chairman of the Tennessee Trial Judges' Association's Judicial Resource Study Committee where redistricting was studied. He is a frequent presenter of Continuing Legal Education Programs, and is a member of the Tennessee Bar Association and of the Cocke, Blount, Grainger, Jefferson and Sevier County Bar Associations.

## **BO BURK**

District Public Defender  
25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

Bo Burk was elected District Public Defender for the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District in 2014. He graduated from the University of Memphis in 2004 and Mississippi College School of Law in 2007. After graduating from law school, he began practicing law with the District Attorney's Office. His wife, Kathleen Glass Burk, sells commercial insurance for Kemmons Wilson. Bo and Kathleen reside in Covington with their three year old son, Payton Harris. Bo Burk is a member of the Tipton County Bar Association, the Fayette County Bar Association, and the Hardeman County Bar Association. He has served on the boards of directors for Corrections Management Corporations, Tipton Bancorpsouth, and Covington First United Methodist Church. Bo is also the Vice President for the Public Defenders Conference.





## **JAMES "J.B." COX**

Chancellor  
17<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

J.B. Cox, a 1989 graduate of MTSU and a 1992 graduate of the Vanderbilt School of Law, is Chancellor of the 17th Judicial District, serving Bedford, Lincoln, Marshall, and Moore Counties. Chancellor Cox has served the 17th Judicial District since 2000. Currently, he is President of the Tennessee Trial Judges Association. He serves as Chairman of the Legislative Committee, Vice Chairman of the Weighted Caseload Committee, and

Co-Chairman of the Compensation Committee of the Tennessee Judicial Conference. He is also a member of the Tennessee Bar Association. Luckily for him, he has been married to Nancy for 28 years. They have two children: a son, Ben, now a junior math major at UAB in Birmingham, and a daughter, Julia, a Sophomore at Fayetteville High School. He and his family live in the Howell Community in Lincoln County, Tennessee. A long time scouter, he serves on the Executive Committee of the Middle Tennessee Council of the Boy Scouts of America and is Scoutmaster of Troop 357 in Fayetteville. He is an elder at the Washington Street Church of Christ in Fayetteville. His hobbies include playing in the Fabulous Fifties variety show, hunting and farming.

## **MARK DAVIDSON**

District Attorney General  
25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

As the District Attorney General in the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, General Davidson has authority and discretion in all matters, including making charging decisions and signing indictments, ordering autopsies in suspicious death cases, requesting independent investigation by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and other state and federal agencies, providing information to the media and public regarding ongoing prosecutions, serving on statutory boards, committees, teams, or councils, allocating office budget resources, and supervising Assistant District Attorneys and other staff. General Davidson previously served as Deputy District attorney General for the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, assisting in day-to-day management and oversight of the existing 52 employees.

He joined the District Attorney's office in 2011 as an Assistant District Attorney primarily assigned to the Somerville Criminal Division office to prosecute cases in Fayette County. General Davidson graduated with a Juris Doctor degree in 1994 from the University Of



Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School Of Law, and obtained his Bachelors degree in Business Administration from the University of Mississippi in 1990. General Davidson has previously served as an Assistant District Attorney General in the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, from 1994 to 1999, when he was primarily assigned to prosecute cases in Lauderdale County for former District Attorney General Elizabeth T. Rice. From 1999 to 2004, General Davidson served as an Assistant State Attorney General for Tennessee Attorney General Paul G. Summers, and prosecuted criminal cases on appeal before the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals and the Tennessee Supreme Court. From 2005 to 2010, General Davidson served as Senior Counsel in the Capital Division of the Attorney General's Office, prosecuting death penalty cases before the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals, the Tennessee Supreme Court, U.S. District Courts of Tennessee, and the United States Supreme Court. General Davidson has prosecuted and practiced law in all five counties of the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, as well as serving as a special prosecutor in Memphis and Shelby County.



### **CRAIG P. FICKLING**

Public Defender  
13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

Craig Fickling was elected District Public Defender for the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District in 2014. He graduated from Millsaps College in 1983 and University of Memphis School of Law in 1991. His wife, Melaney Madewell Fickling, is also an attorney. After graduating from law school, he began practicing law in Cookeville with Ronald Thurman. After Thurman was elected, in 2006, Chancellor for the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, he and Melaney practiced law together. In private practice he represented clients in both civil and criminal cases. He has tried cases in state and federal courts and has successfully argued cases before the Tennessee Court of Appeals, Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals, and the Tennessee Supreme Court, as well as the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He was selected by the United States

District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee to be appointed to represent indigent criminal defendants. Fickling is a member of the Tennessee Bar Association, the Putnam County Bar Association, Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and the Upper Cumberland Trial Lawyers Association. He has served on the boards of directors of Rural Legal Services, the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands, the Putnam County Rural Health Clinic, and the Cookeville Children's Museum, and is a former member of the Capshaw Elementary School PTO. He has also served on the Church Vestry for St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Cookeville.

**JOHN FINE**  
Clerk and Master  
Rhea County



**Personal Information/Service in Public Office:**

Born and raised in Rhea County, Tennessee. Graduate of Rhea County High School & Roane State Community College. Worked in Rhea County Property Assessor's Office from 1984-1986. Elected Circuit Court Clerk 1986-2003. Appointed Clerk & Master in 2003 - Present. Farmer.

**Community Service/Membership History:**

Member of Dayton Rotary Club, Life Member of the NRA, Dayton Masonic Lodge #512, Member of Sons of Confederate Veterans, East Tennessee State Court Clerk's Association, Tennessee State Court Clerk's Association. Member, Board of Directors of the Rhea County Historical Society. Member, Board of Trustees of Buttram Cemetery. Member, Rhea County Historical Museum Taskforce.



**KIM R. HELPER**

District Attorney General  
21<sup>st</sup> Judicial District

Kim Helper is the District Attorney General for the 21<sup>st</sup> Judicial District in Tennessee, which includes Williamson, Hickman, Lewis and Perry Counties. She was appointed to the position by then Governor Bredesen in April 2008 and elected to the position in August 2008 and again in August 2014. Prior to joining the District Attorney's Office, General Helper worked in Tennessee as an Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Justice Division. General Helper is Past-President of the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference. She serves on the Tennessee Bar Association Board of Governors representing the 6<sup>th</sup> District. She is also a member of the Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy

Commission. General Helper is a 1993 graduate of Stetson University College of Law and a 1981 graduate of SUNY College at Buffalo where she earned a degree in Mass Communications. Helper is licensed to practice law in Tennessee, New York and Florida. She is a life-long public servant having previously worked with the State Attorney's Office in Tampa, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights and Trademarks. She is a former broadcast news anchor/reporter. General Helper is an active member of the Morris Heithcock Chapter #41 of the Fraternal Order of Police, St.

Paul's Episcopal Church in Franklin, is past chair of the Board of Directors for My Friend's House in Franklin, Tennessee, Member of the Keep Tennessee Beautiful Advisory Council, Rotarian and Paul Harris Fellow, and most importantly, an MTSU Dance Mom. General Helper resides in Franklin, TN with her husband, Gerry, and daughters Renee and Abby.



**RUSSELL JOHNSON**

District Attorney General  
9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

District Attorney General, 9th Judicial District (Loudon, Roane, Morgan and Meigs) 2006-present  
State Representative, 21st House District (Loudon and Monroe) 2000-2006  
Loudon City Judge – 1998-2006  
Private practice of law – 1990-2006  
University of Tennessee, College of Law (Doctor of Jurisprudence 1990)  
Auburn University (Bachelor of Arts 1986)  
National District Attorneys Association, Board of Directors 2013-present  
Blue Ribbon Task Force on Juvenile Justice 2017-2018  
Tennessee Judicial Nomination Commission 2009-2013

Board of Professional Responsibility, Hearing Committee Member 2016-present  
American Council of Young Political Leaders, (Egypt & Jordan delegation 2003)  
International Republican Institute, presidential election observer (Macedonia 2004)  
Chairman of Sub-Committee in House Judiciary and in House Conservation & Environment 2004-2006

**JIM KYLE**

Chancellor  
30<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

**Year Elected/Appointed**  
2014

**Previous Employment**  
Private Practice, Law Firm of Domico Kyle  
Tennessee Senator for the 30th District (93rd thru 108th General Assemblies)

**Education**  
University of Memphis,  
Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, 1976  
Arkansas State University, 1973



## **Honors**

Recipient 2013 Africa in April Honorary Chairman; 2008 Legislator of the Year, Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association; 1999 President's Award, Tennessee Council of Teachers of English; 1996 Legislator of the Year, Domestic Violence Task Force; 1992 Legislator of the Year, County Officials Association of Tennessee and Tennessee District Attorney Generals Conference; 1991 Legislator of the Year, Shelby County Deputy Sheriffs Association; 1985 Recipient of the Henry Toll Fellowship of the Council of State Government

## **Memberships**

Memphis Bar Association; Board of Governors of American Correctional Association, 1994-1998; Tau Kappa Epsilon Social Fraternity; Phi Delta Phi Legal Fraternity; Tennessee Senate Democratic Leader, 104th through 108th General Assemblies; Member of Tennessee Finance, Ways and Means Committee; Government Operations Committee; Joint Government Operations Subcommittee of Commerce, Labor, Transportation and Agriculture; Joint Government Operations Subcommittee of Judiciary and Government; Rules Committee; Calendar Committee; Delayed Bills Committee; Pension and Insurance Committee; Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations; Chair, Shelby County Delegation, 2009; Select Oversight Committee on Corrections, Chairman (96th through 100th General Assemblies; Democratic Caucus, Chairman (95th General Assembly)



## **KIM R. NELSON**

District Public Defender  
9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

Kim Nelson is the District Public Defender for the 9th Judicial District which comprises the counties of Roane, Loudon, Morgan, and Meigs. The role of the Public Defender's Office is to represent people who have been accused of criminal conduct but who cannot afford a private attorney. Kim, and her staff, accomplish this by traveling to the General Sessions and Criminal Courts in each of the counties she represents. Prior to Kim's election as District Public Defender, she engaged in the private practice of law as a solo practitioner, served as an Assistant District Attorney General for the 9th Judicial District and was elected to the position of Roane County Circuit Court Clerk. After Kim's legal education was complete, she

returned to her hometown of Kingston and has tirelessly given back to her community through her involvement in various professional and civic organizations, the Roane County School Board, and volunteer work at her son's school and her church. Kim's value to her community has not gone unnoticed, resulting in her being recognized by the Roane County Chamber of Commerce's prestigious Paul E. Goldberg Young Professional Award in 2015.

## JOHN RYDER

Member  
Harris | Shelton



John Ryder's practice is split between two divergent areas of law: commercial litigation and election law. He has significant experience representing secured lenders, unsecured creditors' committees, trustees and debtors in the bankruptcy process. He has participated in a number of major bankruptcies including The Julien Companies (the largest bankruptcy ever filed in the Western District of Tennessee), Microwave Products, Wexner & Jacobson, Wang's, XpertTune and Braniff, to name a few. Mr. Ryder has also served as Receiver for Beale Street Historic District, Avery Outdoors, Inc. and First American Monetary Consultants. In addition, Mr. Ryder is knowledgeable in the area of election law, having represented clients in numerous cases involving redistricting matters and election contests, as well as defending clients before the Tennessee Registry of Election Finance. Currently, he is litigation counsel for the Shelby County Election Commission. He teaches Election Law as an Adjunct Professor at Vanderbilt University School of Law. At Harris Shelton since 2000, Mr. Ryder was previously delinquent tax attorney for Shelby County and an assistant county attorney, as well as a member of the Shelby County Home Rule Charter Commission. He served as General Counsel to the Republican National Committee from 2013-2017. He is Chairman of the Republican National Lawyers Association, where he was selected as Lawyer of the Year in 2016. He has been recognized by Business Tennessee Magazine as being among the 101 Best Lawyers in Tennessee and has been listed in Best Lawyers since 1987. Along with his involvement in professional organizations, he has given back to the community through involvement as chairman of the board of trustees of Opera Memphis and as secretary of Memphis Rotary. He has previously served on the boards of the YMCA of Greater Memphis and Bridges.

### Education

Vanderbilt University, J.D., 1974  
Wabash College, A.B., 1971

### Bar Admission

U.S. Supreme Court, 1979  
Tennessee, 1974