

**Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission**  
***Application for Nomination to Judicial Office***

04/15/16

Name: Travis Benson Jones

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(including county)

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(including county)

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[REDACTED]

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**INTRODUCTION**

Tennessee Code Annotated section 17-4-301 et seq. charges the Trial Court Vacancy Commission with assisting the Governor and the People of Tennessee in finding and appointing the best qualified candidates for judicial offices in this State. Please consider the Commission's responsibility in answering the questions in this application questionnaire. For example, when a question asks you to "describe" certain things, please provide a description that contains relevant information about the subject of the question and, especially, that contains detailed information that demonstrates that you are qualified for the judicial office you seek. In order to properly evaluate your application, the Commission needs information about the range of your experience, the depth and breadth of your legal knowledge, and your personal traits such as integrity, fairness, and work habits.

This document is available in word processing format from the Administrative Office of the Courts (telephone 800.448.7970 or 615.741.2687; website [www.tncourts.gov](http://www.tncourts.gov)). The Commission requests that applicants obtain the word processing form and respond directly on the form. Respond in the box provided below each question. (The box will expand as you type in the document.) Review the separate instruction sheet prior to completing this document. Submit original (unbound) completed application (with ink signature) to the Administrative Office of the Courts. In addition, submit a digital copy with electronic or scanned signature via email to [debra.hayes@tncourts.gov](mailto:debra.hayes@tncourts.gov), or via another digital storage device such as flash drive or CD.

THIS APPLICATION IS OPEN TO PUBLIC INSPECTION AFTER YOU SUBMIT IT.

**PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE**

1. State your present employment.

I am an Assistant Public Defender for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District serving Maury, Giles, Lawrence, and Wayne Counties under District Public Defender Claudia S. Jack.

2. State the year you were licensed to practice law in Tennessee and give your Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility number.

2013; BPR# 031734.

3. List all states in which you have been licensed to practice law and include your bar number or identifying number for each state of admission. Indicate the date of licensure and whether the license is currently active. If not active, explain.

Tennessee only; BPR# 031734; April 2013; currently active.

4. Have you ever been denied admission to, suspended or placed on inactive status by the Bar of any State? If so, explain. (This applies even if the denial was temporary).

No.

5. List your professional or business employment/experience since the completion of your legal education. Also include here a description of any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law in which you have ever been engaged (excluding military service, which is covered by a separate question).

I received my approval letter from the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners on a Friday afternoon, and my first referral that Saturday. The client had a pendente lite hearing on a divorce the following Monday morning, and I asked my father if he could swear me in before court on Monday morning so I could take my first client and case. Midday Sunday, my father decided it would be great if we could do it that afternoon so my son could be present. I made phone calls to a few close friends from the local legal community and a couple of hours later I was sworn in by my father on the back porch of my parents' house with my son, my mother and father, and my sister's family. I opened a solo practice the next day, which included family law, personal injury, criminal defense, property law, estate work, child support, and juvenile law.

In May 2013, I accepted a part-time position as an Assistant Public Defender, which later transitioned into a full-time Assistant Public Defender position in August 2014.

During my second year of law school, I worked 1-2 days a week as an intern for the District Attorney General's Office in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District both observing and acting as a victim/witness coordinator. My third and fourth years of law school, I worked under Supreme Court Rule 7 as a prosecutor (for the same office) 2-3 days a week, assisting in all of the General Sessions Courts in the district. All of this work was voluntary with the exception of receiving one class credit at the Nashville School of Law.

Before attending law school, I served as president and general manager of Jones Home Furnishings, a family retail furniture store in Columbia, Tennessee, from 1998-2008. Business operation included management of up to sixteen employees and the purchasing and creation of all advertising for the business, which included doing all radio and television spots. Although I did not fully appreciate the breadth of the experience at the time, running a business involved exposure to many legal realms including employment law, accounting, taxes, workers compensation, unemployment, finance and secured transactions, and real estate leases and maintenance. The most important part of that experience was having to lower the number of employees by half following the huge hit the furniture business took in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Our gross revenue dropped over 30% from 2001 to 2002, and drastic measures were required to keep the doors open. It was tough and one of the greatest learning experiences of my life.

My first "adult" job as a college graduate was with SunTrust Bank in Knoxville, Tennessee, as multi-purpose teller, loan officer, and customer service representative. I worked in the first Wal-Mart branch in the Knoxville area. That position was followed by a promotion to Personal Banker at the Bearden branch (also in Knoxville). The Wal-Mart branch concept required all employees being cross-trained to do anything in the branch. This significantly influenced my management philosophy because it was a very self-sufficient way to operate a business and required minimal management.

I began working as furniture deliveryman for my family's business beginning at age 12 (at the insistence of my father). I learned early to appreciate the value of making money. I worked two summers at the end of high school and the first year of college as a teller at Middle Tennessee Bank in Columbia. I was the only male in the branch and to say that was a learning experience for an 18-year-old would be an understatement. One summer in college, I worked on a heater assembly line at Heil Quaker in Lewisburg, Tennessee. Many I worked with on that assembly line graduated from high school, applied for a job there, and intended to work on the line for the rest of his or her life. That experience made me study harder when I returned to college in the fall.

6. Describe the nature of your present law practice, listing the major areas of law in which you practice and the percentage each constitutes of your total practice.

As an Assistant Public Defender, 100% of my practice constitutes criminal defense of indigent persons. All of those clients are appointed representation by our office from General Sessions and Circuit Courts in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District. I am in court a minimum of 3 days per week in at least two counties. From May 2013 to August 21, 2018, I closed 5,955 cases as an Assistant Public Defender. Representation of 10+ clients in a day occurs frequently.

7. Describe generally your experience (over your entire time as a licensed attorney) in trial courts, appellate courts, administrative bodies, legislative or regulatory bodies, other forums, and/or transactional matters.

Prior to becoming a full-time Assistant Public Defender, my solo practice involved a wide variety general practice as listed above, including appointed and hired criminal work and mixture of civil practice.

**Trial Work:**

I have had 15 jury trials, and at least 3 bench trials, while working for the Public Defender's Office, including First Degree Murder. My first jury trial was as a law student, while working under Rule 7 for the District Attorney General's Office.

I had one civil jury trial in private practice as Plaintiff's counsel in a personal injury/property damage case involving an automobile accident. I also participated in mediations and hearings in divorce and juvenile court proceedings, and I served as guardian ad litem in conservatorship cases prior to becoming a full-time employee of the Public Defender's Office.

**Appellate Work:**

I have argued twice before the Court of Criminal Appeals and once before the Tennessee Supreme Court. The potential opportunity to argue a case on appeal was one of the reasons I sought to work for the Public Defender's Office rather than pursuing a job as a prosecutor.

8. Describe any matters of special note involving your practice in trial courts, appellate courts, and administrative bodies.

In a unanimous opinion, the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed the trial and intermediate appellate courts and overturned my client's conviction for stalking in *State v. Flowers*, 512 S.W.3d 161 (Tenn. 2016). The Court held that the evidence was insufficient to support the subjective requirement of emotional distress as a necessary element of stalking.

9. Describe any other legal experience, not stated above, that you would like to bring to the

attention of the Commission.

My experience as an Assistant Public Defender has been very eye opening. A tremendous number of cases enter the court system each week. It is amazing to me how little of what truly occurs in daily law enforcement and our overall criminal justice system is seen by trial judges (and even less by appellate courts) because of the great filtering system our General Sessions courts provide. These issues include everything from court costs, to the pitfalls of the sex offender registry and drug-free zones, that seldom reach our trial courts because of the efforts of defense lawyers, Assistant District Attorneys, and General Sessions Judges.

Serving as an Assistant Public Defender has also required me to be far more aware of the many additional hardships that can impact my clients beyond the entry of a guilty plea. Mandatory fines and court costs are especially concerning for indigent defendants. These issues are exacerbated by the suspension and revocation of driver's licenses for those who cannot meet those financial obligations.

In an effort to make our communities safer, the number of law enforcement officers has grown exponentially over the last 30 years. That has dramatically increased the number of criminal cases that enter our judicial system each week. Those increased case numbers have created an ever-increasing need for larger jails and courthouses, additional Assistant District Attorneys, Assistant Public Defenders, and Judges. Thankfully, I have been fortunate enough to find a vocation that I love, so the necessary long days to process all the cases that flow through our system are something I enjoy.

I am ready. My varied civil practice, extensive criminal practice, and the tremendous amount of time I've spent in court prepare me for this position.

10. List and describe all prior occasions on which you have submitted an application for any state or federal judicial position.

This is my first.

### EDUCATION

11. List each college, law school, and other graduate school which you have attended, including dates of attendance, degree awarded, major, any form of recognition or other aspects of your education you believe are relevant, and your reason for leaving each school if no degree was awarded.

University of Tennessee at Knoxville; 1992-1996; Bachelor of Science with a Major in Marketing

Nashville School of Law; 2009-2012; Doctor of Jurisprudence.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

12. State your date of birth.

██████ 1974

13. How long have you lived continuously in the State of Tennessee?

Since birth.

14. How long have you lived continuously in the county where you are now living?

All of my life, other than my time at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and approximately 18-20 months following college while employed at SunTrust Bank in Knoxville.

15. State the county in which you are registered to vote.

Maury

16. Describe your military service, if applicable, including branch of service, dates of active duty, rank at separation, and decorations, honors, or achievements. Please also state whether you received an honorable discharge and, if not, describe why not.

Not applicable. I have always been humbled, more and more as I age, by those who made such great sacrifices. We cannot thank them enough.

17. Have you ever pled guilty or been convicted or are now on diversion for violation of any law, regulation or ordinance other than minor traffic offenses? If so, state the approximate date, charge and disposition of the case.

My freshman year of college (fall of 1992), I pled guilty to the charge of underage consumption. I was seated on a sidewalk waiting on a ride when law enforcement arrived to tell the party where I had been to quiet down. When the door wasn't answered, the officers were irritated and questioned the three of us seated on the sidewalk outside the apartment building. I admitted to having a few beers and was charged with underage consumption.

My sophomore year of college I was stopped for speeding (50 in a 35 down a large hill in Knoxville on Western Avenue near Knoxville College) and charged with DUI. My breathalyzer results came back under the adult legal limit, but I was 19. I pled guilty to reckless driving.

Spending a night in jail in the “drunk tank” was an invaluable experience for me as a criminal defense attorney. It made me a better lawyer and advocate for my clients because I understand what it is like to spend time in jail, even if only one night. Most lawyers, prosecutors, and judges, have not shared in this experience. One day in jail is often viewed as insignificant by those working in the criminal court system because we deal with jail time and lengthy sentences every day. I understand that an additional night in jail is not like the penny you ignore on the ground.

18. To your knowledge, are you now under federal, state or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute or disciplinary rule? If so, give details.

No.

19. Please identify the number of formal complaints you have responded to that were filed against you with any supervisory authority, including but not limited to a court, a board of professional responsibility, or a board of judicial conduct, alleging any breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct by you. Please provide any relevant details on any such complaint if the complaint was not dismissed by the court or board receiving the complaint.

Early in my practice, a client from an appointed case complained to the Board of Professional Responsibility that I was rude to her. She had called my personal cell phone from the jail, and was offended when I told her I was eating lunch and was not going to continue the irrational conversation. After responding to the Board in writing, I heard nothing further.

20. Has a tax lien or other collection procedure been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities or creditors within the last five (5) years? If so, give details.

No.

21. Have you ever filed bankruptcy (including personally or as part of any partnership, LLC, corporation, or other business organization)?

No.

22. Have you ever been a party in any legal proceedings (including divorces, domestic proceedings, and other types of proceedings)? If so, give details including the date, court and docket number and disposition. Provide a brief description of the case. This question does not seek, and you may exclude from your response, any matter where you

were involved only as a nominal party, such as if you were the trustee under a deed of trust in a foreclosure proceeding.

I was divorced February 17, 2004, in Maury Chancery Docket No. 03-690. The matter was settled by agreed marital dissolution agreement and permanent parenting plan done without mediation. We have worked well together in raising our now 16-year-old son and have never returned to court with any other issues.

23. List all organizations other than professional associations to which you have belonged within the last five (5) years, including civic, charitable, religious, educational, social and fraternal organizations. Give the titles and dates of any offices which you have held in such organizations.

Kiwanis Club, currently and since 1998; Board of Directors on and off 7-8 years; President 2008-09.

Graymere Country Club, currently; Board of Directors 2013-17; President 2016.

Leadership Maury (a program of the Maury County Chamber of Commerce), currently; Board of Directors; current President-Elect.

Columbia Elks Lodge (Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks), currently and since 2000.

24. Have you ever belonged to any organization, association, club or society which limits its membership to those of any particular race, religion, or gender? Do not include in your answer those organizations specifically formed for a religious purpose, such as churches or synagogues.

- a. If so, list such organizations and describe the basis of the membership limitation.
- b. If it is not your intention to resign from such organization(s) and withdraw from any participation in their activities should you be nominated and selected for the position for which you are applying, state your reasons.

Phi Gamma Delta college fraternity excluded women, but to my knowledge did not exclude anyone based on race or religion.

The Boy Scouts of America limited membership to boys when I belonged.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

25. List all bar associations and professional societies of which you have been a member within the last ten years, including dates. Give the titles and dates of any offices which



you have held in such groups. List memberships and responsibilities on any committee of professional associations which you consider significant.

Maury County Bar Association since 2013; President of the Young Lawyers Division from May 2014-May 2016.

Tennessee Bar Association since 2018; member of the Young Lawyers Division Board from 2014-16.

Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (TACDL) since 2013; graduate of the Tennessee Criminal Defense Trial College, 2016.

Mock Trial Judge, 2015, 2018.

26. List honors, prizes, awards or other forms of recognition which you have received since your graduation from law school which are directly related to professional accomplishments.

Not applicable other than what is listed above.

27. List any public office you have held or for which you have been candidate or applicant. Include the date, the position, and whether the position was elective or appointive.

Not applicable.

### **ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

28. What are your reasons for seeking this position? *(150 words or less)*

I have enjoyed the practice of law more than I ever imagined, and the reputation and image of our bar and judiciary is very important to me.

Our Judicial District has been fortunate to have great judges over the years who have exhibited character, fairness, and common sense. I can continue that legacy, and it would be the honor of a lifetime to serve this Judicial District for many years to come.

29. Describe the judgeship you seek (i.e. geographic area, types of cases, number of judges, etc. and explain how your selection would impact the court. *(150 words or less)*

Four judges currently serve as Circuit Judges and Chancellors, hearing all criminal and civil

matters in Maury, Giles, Lawrence, and Wayne counties.

If appointed, I will seamlessly transition to the position on November 1<sup>st</sup>. I will certainly ask others for advice and help when necessary, but I am ready to work. Further, my father's paralegal has agreed to stay in her position if I am appointed. She is looked upon with tremendous respect by the lawyers in our district and would be a tremendous asset.

My current position has prepared me for the compassion, patience, and communication skills necessary for a respected judge. Fairness, temperament, adherence to the law, a strong work ethic, respect for litigants and attorneys, and accessibility are important attributes. If appointed, I shall strive to make my conduct and words, in and out of court, measure up to the highest standards of those attributes.

30. Will you uphold the law even if you disagree with the substance of the law (e.g., statute or rule) at issue? Give an example from your experience as a licensed attorney that supports your response to this question. *(250 words or less)*

I will always uphold the law. That is the core of the oath, which I take very seriously. It is a judge's most important duty.

I know that there will be tough decisions when the law must be followed. As a defense lawyer, I have often prepared clients for those consequences knowing the implications for my clients. I am prepared for those occasions as a judge.

The negotiation of a criminal case often involves amending the initial charges for any number of reasons, such as overcharging, unjust and unwarranted accusations, or problematic evidence. I understand that those negotiations and amendments are the province of prosecutors and defense lawyers, not judges.

I have remained true to the law and to my duty as an officer of the court, even when tested. I fought to the Tennessee Supreme Court (see *State v. Flowers*, mentioned above) for a client whose conduct was reprehensible, but not criminal. While I disagreed with my client's conduct, it did not meet the elements of the crime of stalking, and I fought to obtain the correct decision.

On the other hand, I have stood next to many defendants whom I thought the prescribed statutory punishment was excessive under their specific circumstances. I have explained to them that, despite the personal implications of their result and the seemingly unfair punishment, the legislature sets the repercussions for certain conduct, and the District Attorney's job is to enforce those laws.

### REFERENCES

31. List five (5) persons, and their current positions and contact information, who would recommend you for the judicial position for which you are applying. Please list at least

two persons who are not lawyers. Please note that the Commission or someone on its behalf may contact these persons regarding your application.

A. Judge J. Russell Parkes, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Circuit Judge; 14 Public Square, Columbia, TN 38401; [REDACTED]
B. Judge Robert L. Holloway, Jr., Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals Judge and Scoutmaster of Troop 111 (from which I “graduated” as an Eagle Scout); 418 West 7 <sup>th</sup> Street, Columbia, TN 38401; [REDACTED]
C. Judge Patricia McGuire, General Sessions Judge of Lawrence County; NBU II, Lawrence County Courthouse, 240 West Gaines Street, Lawrenceburg, TN 38464; [REDACTED]
D. William “Bill” Walter, retired CEO of Maury Regional Hospital; [REDACTED] Columbia, TN 38401; [REDACTED]
E. Sheriff Bucky Rowland, Maury County Sheriff; 1300 Lawson White Drive, Columbia, TN 38401; [REDACTED]

**AFFIRMATION CONCERNING APPLICATION**

Read, and if you agree to the provisions, sign the following:

I have read the foregoing questions and have answered them in good faith and as completely as my records and recollections permit. I hereby agree to be considered for nomination to the Governor for the office of Judge of the [Court] 22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District of Tennessee, and if appointed by the Governor, agree to serve that office. In the event any changes occur between the time this application is filed and the public hearing, I hereby agree to file an amended questionnaire with the Administrative Office of the Courts for distribution to the Commission members.

I understand that the information provided in this questionnaire shall be open to public inspection upon filing with the Administrative Office of the Courts and that the Commission may publicize the names of persons who apply for nomination and the names of those persons the Commission nominates to the Governor for the judicial vacancy in question.

Dated: August 27, 2018.

  
Signature

When completed, return this questionnaire to Sebley Hayes, Administrative Office of the Courts, 511 Union Street, Suite 600, Nashville, TN 37219.



**TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**

511 UNION STREET, SUITE 600  
NASHVILLE CITY CENTER  
NASHVILLE, TN 37219

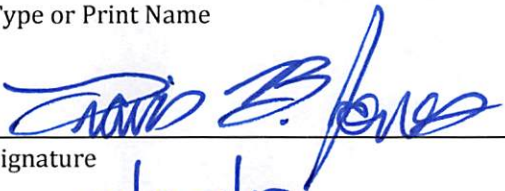
**TENNESSEE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY  
TENNESSEE BOARD OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT  
AND OTHER LICENSING BOARDS**

**WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

I hereby waive the privilege of confidentiality with respect to any information that concerns me, including public discipline, private discipline, deferred discipline agreements, diversions, dismissed complaints and any complaints erased by law, and is known to, recorded with, on file with the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of Tennessee, the Tennessee Board of Judicial Conduct (previously known as the Court of the Judiciary) and any other licensing board, whether within or outside the State of Tennessee, from which I have been issued a license that is currently active, inactive or other status. I hereby authorize a representative of the Trial Court Vacancy Commission to request and receive any such information and distribute it to the membership of the Commission and to the Office of the Governor.

Travis B. Jones

\_\_\_\_\_  
Type or Print Name

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

8/27/18  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_031734\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
BPR #

Please identify other licensing boards that have issued you a license, including the state issuing the license and the license number.

I was licensed over twenty years ago in property, casualty, and life insurance by the State of Tennessee, but those licenses have long since lapsed

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