

Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office

3/4/26

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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 Microsoft Word format from the Administrative Office of the Courts (telephone 800-448-7970 or 615-741-2687; website www.tncourts.gov). The Commission requests that applicants obtain the Microsoft Word 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. Your complete application, including both the original and digital copies, must be received by the Administrative Office of the Courts on or before the deadline prescribed in the Notice of Vacancy. See section 1(g) of the application instructions for additional information related to hand-delivery of application packages.

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

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE

1. State your present employment.

I serve as an Assistant Public Defender for the Second Judicial District, encompassing Sullivan County, Tennessee.

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

2014; 033417.

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; 033417; Licensed since 2014; 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).

Assistant Public Defender; September 2022 – present

2nd Judicial District; composed solely of Sullivan County.

Assistant District Attorney; May 2018 – August 2022

1st Judicial District; composed of Carter, Johnson, Unicoi, and Washington Counties.

Assistant District Attorney; February 2015 – April 2018

8th Judicial District; composed of Campbell, Claiborne, Fentress, Scott, and Union Counties.

Administrative Assistant; September 2014 – January 2015

While awaiting bar results, and shortly thereafter, I worked as the Administrative Assistant at the Carter County Sheriff's Office. I performed various duties such as assisting in the new employee interview process, budgeting, writing policies and procedures, and interacting with the public.

Internships

- Throughout my second summer of law school, I worked at a local law firm, focusing on criminal defense work.
- I completed a legal externship at the District Attorney's Office in the First Judicial District during my first summer of law school.
- During my senior year of college, I completed a paralegal internship at a local law firm.
- I spent the Spring semester of college in 2010 as an intern for the Tennessee General Assembly. I was the committee intern for the House Consumer and Employee Affairs Committee.
- At the beginning of my college career, during the summer of 2007, I interned at the Elizabethton Driver's License Office, performing various customer service tasks.

Other Employment

- In college, I spent three years working at Lowe's Home Improvement. Most of this employment was spent at the customer service desk, where in addition to cashier duties, I answered phone calls into the store, handled returns, and executed general customer service.
- During college, I worked as a preschool teacher at a local daycare and a substitute teacher for the Carter County School System.
- During high school, I worked as a caregiver at a church daycare center, cleaned houses, and spent time tutoring other students.

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.

I serve as an Assistant Public Defender in Sullivan County, Tennessee. I represent individuals in Sullivan County Criminal Court. This constitutes 100% of my practice. There are two criminal court judges, and most of my caseload is in front of Judge William Rogers. I have also handled cases in front of Judge James Goodwin, including two homicide trials. I represent defendants in criminal matters, from misdemeanors, such as DUIs and domestic assault, to serious felonies, such as homicides, robberies, and sexual offenses. While the Public Defender's Office consists of a large team of attorneys, investigators, social workers, and support staff, I work mainly with three other attorneys who are assigned to Judge Rogers' docket and one paralegal.

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.

In my career, I have practiced both as a prosecutor and defense attorney in courts with criminal jurisdiction. The majority of my cases have been in Criminal Court, while handling General Sessions cases and delinquent juvenile matters when needed. I have tried no less than thirty jury trials in three judicial districts before six different judges.

At the beginning of my legal career, I served as an Assistant District Attorney in the Eighth Judicial District of Tennessee for over three years. I handled cases in General Sessions and Criminal Courts in all five counties of the district, including Campbell, Claiborne, Fentress, Scott, and Union Counties. For approximately half of that time, I was the DUI and vehicular homicide prosecutor and handled many complex hearings and trials in Criminal Court. I also conducted several training courses for law enforcement officers and other prosecutors.

When there was an opening in the First Judicial District of Tennessee (which includes Carter, Johnson, Washington, and Unicoi Counties) for a DUI and vehicular homicide prosecutor, I applied for the position, as I wished to return to my home district to be closer to my family. I worked in that role for around two years, mainly in Washington County, before moving into a position as the lead prosecutor in Johnson County for both General Sessions and Criminal Court. One of the biggest challenges I faced in this role was with having a large prison located within the county resulting in an influx of violent prison-related cases. After serving in that role for around one year, I returned to Washington County as a prosecutor in Criminal Court, Part I, where I stayed until leaving the District Attorney's Office. In this role, I prosecuted all types of criminal matters, including a large number of sexual assault and child abuse cases.

In October 2022, I accepted my current position as an Assistant Public Defender in the Second Judicial District. I handle cases from the time our office is appointed until the final resolution of the case. A large part of my current practice involves reviewing discovery, evidentiary hearings, consultations with expert witnesses, plea negotiations, violation of probation hearings, both bench and jury trials, sentencing hearings, and other post-conviction matters. In this role, I focus

on advocating for clients in ways that will improve their lives beyond resolution of their criminal case. I work with clients to seek treatment for both substance abuse and mental health issues, with the hope that they will be less likely to re-offend once their underlying issues are treated.

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

While every case is the most significant case for the parties involved, the following cases are particularly memorable to me as an advocate:

PROSECUTION:

State v. Denver C. Smith, Case no. 2018-CR-43566

Prosecutor- Washington County Criminal Court

I served as prosecutor in *State v. Denver C. Smith*. Mr. Smith was charged with first degree murder and attempted carjacking, among other charges. The evidence showed that Mr. Smith was suffering from delusions when he shot a young lady multiple times who survived. While fleeing the scene, Mr. Smith attempted to steal a car, and in the process, fired multiple rounds from a handgun into a passing car, fatally striking a nineteen-year-old lady inside. After undergoing a forensic evaluation, Mr. Smith was deemed to be suffering from acute psychosis at the time of the offense, likely induced by the use of methamphetamine, but was not found to meet the requirements for commitment. Based on those findings, my co-counsel and I proceeded with the criminal prosecution. During a multi-day jury trial, the defense presented proof of Mr. Smith's insanity at the time of offense, including calling the State's own expert witness to testify to Mr. Smith's state of mind. The jury returned a guilty verdict, and Mr. Smith was sentenced to life with the possibility of parole. The Court of Criminal Appeals upheld the conviction (*State v. Smith*, 2024 WL 3177927 (Tenn. Crim. App. 2024)). This case stands out to me due to the senseless nature of the crime, and had Mr. Smith received proper mental health care, the victim may still be alive.

State v. Adam Nicholas Wallace, Case no. 10774

Prosecutor- Scott County Criminal Court

While prosecuting cases in the Eighth Judicial District, I handled several sexual assault cases. Adam Wallace was convicted as charged after a jury trial for aggravated sexual battery and he received a prison sentence of ten years with the requirement to register as a sexual offender. This case was difficult to prosecute because there was no forensic evidence, and the only eyewitness, other than the victim, was her young sister. Both girls were very nervous about testifying in court, but with the assistance of the Child Advocacy Center, we were able to prepare them and make them more comfortable with an intimidating process and environment. This case instilled in me the importance of taking into consideration the impact the legal process has on crime victims.

State v. James W. Burton, Case no. 15-146

Prosecutor- Fentress County Criminal Court

One of the more unusual jury trials I participated in as a prosecutor was *State v. James W. Burton*. Mr. Burton was charged with aggravated perjury, stemming from years of civil litigation between him and his ex-girlfriend. After years of abusing civil process and multiple denied appeals, he filed for an order of protection against his ex-girlfriend. Mr. Burton testified under oath during the order of protection hearing that she was harassing him among some other allegations. The order of protection was dismissed, due in part to the other party having proof she was in another state when the alleged events occurred. At the trial for aggravated perjury, we had to prove that he was lying during the order of protection hearing. We were able to do so through extensive documentation, introducing approximately fifty exhibits. The jury convicted Mr. Burton of perjury, a lesser-included offense, for which he received probation. Mr. Burton appealed the conviction, and it was upheld (*State v. Burton*, 2017 WL 3669627 (Tenn. Crim. App. 2017)).

State v. Shannon Clark, Case no. 2019-CR-2019/2019-CR-202

Prosecutor- Johnson County Criminal Court

While prosecuting cases in Johnson County, I frequently had cases involving the prison. One such case was *State v. Shannon Clark*. Ms. Clark was a prison guard and, after investigation, was charged with introduction of contraband and official misconduct. After plea negotiations were not fruitful, the case was tried before a jury. This case was complicated by the unwillingness of witnesses, including prisoners and some of her former co-workers, to cooperate with the prosecution. I was able to overcome those challenges, and Ms. Clark was convicted as charged and sentenced to probation.

State v. Eric Brandon Campbell, Case no. 17285

Prosecutor- Campbell County Criminal Court

I prosecuted Eric Campbell for vehicular homicide in Campbell County. Mr. Campbell was driving a vehicle while impaired and crashed into another vehicle driven by a well-respected local pastor, killing him. As a result, this case was heavily covered by the media. Based on the investigation and in consultation with experts in the field of crash reconstruction and pharmacology, the District Attorney's Office sought a presentment charging the defendant with vehicular homicide. Due to the complexities of the search warrant for Mr. Campbell's blood and chain of custody issues, there were multiple evidentiary hearings, including a suppression hearing that lasted an entire day. After the trial court denied the defendant's motion to suppress, Mr. Campbell pled guilty as charged and received a prison sentence of eight and a half years.

State v. William H. Lawson, Case no. 2019-CR-45196

Prosecutor- Washington County Criminal Court

As the prosecutor in *State v. William H. Lawson*, I was able to resolve the case with a guilty plea in an expeditious matter. I received a call from law enforcement on the night of the offense notifying me of a fatality that was the result of a car crash likely due to impairment. The defendant had no criminal record. Based on a thorough investigation by law enforcement, I was able to reach a plea agreement with Mr. Lawson's attorney and enter it on his first appearance after arraignment in Criminal Court. Mr. Lawson had posted bond and went back into custody on that date to begin serving an eight-year prison sentence, pleading guilty as charged. The victim was a young, hard-working man in college, whose family had a particularly difficult time grieving the monumental loss. By the prosecution getting ahead of any potential issues, the defense waived the preliminary hearing and did not file any evidentiary motions. This prevented the victim's family from being subjected to court hearings involving the horrific details of the crime and allowed them to work towards closure more quickly than is normally experienced in vehicular homicide cases.

DEFENSE:

State v. Clifford Smith, Case no. S71930

Defense Counsel- Sullivan County Criminal Court

My first jury trial at the Public Defender's Office was *State v. Clifford Smith*. My client was in his sixties, had no criminal record, and was charged with domestic assault. Through a rigorous cross-examination of the alleged victim, I was able to point out several inconsistencies in the proof. The jury acquitted Mr. Smith and he was elated. While this was only a misdemeanor offense, it was of great importance to Mr. Smith. This trial emphasized for me the significance of being charged with any criminal offense, even a misdemeanor, and the impact it can have on someone's life. All cases are significant, no matter what the charge.

State v. James Lee Fagans, Case no. S70367

Defense Counsel- Sullivan County Criminal Court

I, along with my co-counsel, defended *State v. James Lee Fagans*. Mr. Fagans was charged with first degree murder, especially aggravated robbery, and aggravated assault resulting in death. It was undisputed that Mr. Fagans was present when the victim was murdered. Our theory of defense was that Mr. Fagans' brother killed the victim, and our client was simply present during the crime. Through the investigation, law enforcement was able to locate the shirt our client was wearing during the event, which was covered in the victim's blood. The State called expert witnesses, including in the field of blood spatter and forensic pathology, to disprove our theory. After a three-day jury trial, Mr. Fagans was convicted of the lesser-included offense of voluntary manslaughter, aggravated robbery, and aggravated assault resulting in death and was sentenced to serve sixteen years in prison. Currently, Mr. Fagans has a motion for new trial pending before

beginning the appellate process.

State v. Saul A. Carrera, Case no. S77236

Defense Counsel- Sullivan County Criminal Court

In *State v. Saul Carrera*, I represented Mr. Carrera as defense counsel in a multi-day jury trial in Sullivan County, in which he was charged with four counts of vehicular homicide, among other related offenses. Mr. Carrera was driving a tractor trailer when it struck and killed four pedestrians who were changing a tire on the side of the interstate. The crime scene pictures were extremely graphic and the proof at trial showed he had a blood alcohol content of .0117, above the per se limit. Both sides had multiple expert witnesses involved in the case. I filed several pre-trial motions, including a motion to suppress and a motion to dismiss for failure to preserve evidence. Ultimately, after three days of evidence, he was convicted as charged and received a forty-three-year prison sentence. This trial was complicated due to Mr. Carrera and some of the State's witnesses speaking English only as a second language and requiring the use of an interpreter. Also, by the time of trial, Mr. Carrera had become legally blind and almost deaf, so it was difficult to communicate with him throughout the proceedings. The logistical components were complicated, but through cooperation with the prosecution and trial judge, those issues were able to be addressed pre-trial, and as a result, the trial moved forward seamlessly. Mr. Carrera has a pending motion for a new trial.

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

My experience serving as both an Assistant Public Defender and Assistant District Attorney has given me a unique understanding of the criminal justice system. I have seen the importance of balancing accountability for criminal conduct and protecting the public, while also ensuring defendants have access to resources that support rehabilitation and reduce recidivism.

As a prosecutor, I was exposed to the benefits of the local programs like Recovery Court and the Day Reporting Center. I had to evaluate each case and determine when defendants would benefit more from intervention than incarceration, particularly in matters involving substance use and underlying mental health concerns. I saw numerous defendants successfully complete these programs and witnessed the meaningful impact their success had, not only on their own lives, but also their families and the victims involved.

As a public defender, my previous knowledge allowed me to be more equipped to better advocate for my clients. I represent many clients whose criminal conduct is directly tied to their mental health struggles and lack of resources. I often have clients successfully take advantage of our local resources like the Sullivan County Recovery Court, Tennessee Recovery Oriented Compliance Strategy Program, and Sullivan County Anti-Drug Coalition. Our office also has a forensic social worker, who I work closely with to address more than just our clients' legal needs. We provide them with resources and services to address other needs

such as treatment, health care, housing, and in some cases conservatorships. By addressing more than just their legal needs, I strive to provide long-term resolutions to prevent recidivism.

Overall, my experience has made me more cognizant of the complexities of mental health and substance abuse within the criminal justice system. These experiences have shaped my approach to the law, reinforcing the value of balancing public safety with meaningful opportunities for individuals to become productive members of society.

Continuing my own legal education has also been a vital part of my legal experience. No matter how experienced or talented a lawyer is it is imperative to continue to listen to different ideas and points of view to improve oneself and our judicial system. As a prosecutor and defense lawyer, I have had opportunities to attend specialized seminars, in addition to the annual training hosted by the District Attorney and Public Defender's Conferences. I have completed specific training in the defense of capital cases and am qualified pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 13 to represent defendants as both lead and co-counsel in capital cases. While serving as DUI prosecutor, I was afforded the opportunity to attend several different courses to further my knowledge in the field such as crash reconstruction, toxicology, physiology of eye movements, and I attended the National Lifesavers Conference on Roadway Safety in San Antonio, Texas.

Throughout my career, I have been involved in multiple training opportunities for both law enforcement and attorneys. As a prosecutor, I frequently participated in trainings for law enforcement, working with the Tennessee Highway Safety Office, the Peace Officer Standards & Training Commission, the Tennessee Highway Patrol, and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. I taught other prosecutors through training courses hosted by the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference, including speaking on a panel during the annual state-wide conference. I frequently spoke at the Victim Impact Panels for Mothers Against Drunk Driving while serving as a DUI prosecutor. As a prosecutor, and continuing as a defense attorney, I have spoken at several different schools for career days and other events, as community involvement is an important part of the legal profession.

While serving as an Assistant District Attorney, one of my specific duties was to serve as a team member on both the Child Protective Investigative Team ("CPIT") and the Vulnerable Adult Protective Investigative Team ("VAPIT"). Both teams are outlined by statute to coordinate with various entities such as law enforcement, the Department of Children's Services, and the Child Advocacy Center for CPIT and law enforcement, Adult Protective Services, and public housing for VAPIT. These teams investigate potential child and vulnerable adult crimes and prosecute cases for which individuals have criminal responsibility.

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

Not applicable.

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.

Appalachian School of Law, Grundy, Virginia, 2011 – 2014

Juris Doctor, May 2014

Juris Master, January 2013

- Appalachian Natural Resources Law Journal, Executive Articles Editor
- Vice President of the Student Bar Association
- Willard Owens Award for Excellence in Community Service
- Co-Chairman of the Charitable Endeavors Committee
- Volunteer Coordinator of the Remote Area Medical Clinic
- Historian of Phi Delta Phi Honor Society
- Vice President of Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity
- Treasurer of Alternative Dispute Resolution Society
- School Ambassador
- Angela D. Dales Merit Scholarship Recipient.

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2008 – 2011

Bachelor of Science with double-major in Political Science and History, May 2011

- Tennessee House Resolution 372 for exemplary performance as a legislative intern
- Dean's List
- Member of Tau Sigma Honor Society
- Member of Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honor Society
- Member of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, 2007 – 2008

Transferred to ETSU

- Member of Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society
- Member of Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Society
- Member of College Republicans

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

1989.

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

I have been a Tennessee resident for my entire life, although I attended law school in Virginia during 2011 through 2014.

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

I have lived in Carter County most of my life and continuously for the previous six years.

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

Carter.

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.

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.

No.

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. You may wish to request a report from the appropriate supervisory authority (or authorities) for a complete history.

I have not received any formal complaints which required a response. When I was a prosecutor in Washington County, there was a pro se defendant who filed a complaint with the Board of Professional Responsibility's Consumer Assistance Program. I was not required to respond, as the complaint was without merit.

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.

No.

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.

East Tennessee Republican Club, Member (2019 – present).

Caldwell Springs Baptist Church, Member (attended since birth).

Elizabethton Woman's Civic Club, Parliamentarian and Board Member (June 2025 – present), President (June 2024 – May 2025), First Vice President (June 2023 – May 2024), Second Vice President (June 2022 – May 2023).

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.
- If so, list such organizations and describe the basis of the membership limitation.
 - 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.

- I have been a member of the Elizabethton Woman's Civic Club for eight years. While only female community members are eligible for membership, we support various community service projects throughout the Elizabethton and Carter County area which benefit a wide range of recipients.
- I will continue to be an active member, as I enjoy giving back to my community through our charitable endeavors.

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.

Appalachian School of Law Alumni Board, Member 2021 – 2022. We worked on various ways to support the law school, alumni, and current students, including fundraising and recruitment.

Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Member (2022 – present).

National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Member (2022 – present).

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.

2017 East Tennessee DUI Prosecutor of the Year, presented by the Tennessee Highway Safety Office.

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.

Upon the illness of a General Sessions Judge in Washington County in 2020, I applied to serve in that position but was not selected.

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

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

This position will allow me to serve the citizens in the region I love. I have lived in the First Judicial District most of my life. Having grown up as the daughter of a Tennessee State Trooper and later, Carter County Sheriff, my commitment to the people of this district runs deep. My experiences as a prosecutor, defense attorney, and crime victim (home burglary) have made me realize that when many people encounter the criminal justice system, it is because they have experienced something tragic, either as a crime victim or defendant. I appreciate the importance of holding people accountable for their actions and the significant role the judiciary plays in maintaining public safety while providing fairness, compassion, and justice for those who may be at their lowest point. I will draw upon my experiences to treat all people with dignity and respect, regardless of their station in life.

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)*

I am seeking the position of Criminal Court Judge, Part II, for the First Judicial District. The district is comprised of four counties, including Carter, Johnson, Washington, and Unicoi Counties, encompassing rural and urban areas. This position oversees a wide range of criminal matters. Serving this district are two criminal court judges, two circuit court judges, and one chancellor. This district contains two residential recovery court facilities, a day reporting center, and Northeast Correctional Facility. Last year, this court handled approximately 1,700 total cases with thirty-one jury trials, ten of which were homicides.

My experience as a prosecutor and defense lawyer, having tried cases in multiple jurisdictions in front of numerous judges, as well as familiarity with this district, will allow me to provide a seamless transition. I will manage the court's large docket, while providing unbiased, fair, and prompt decisions.

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)

If selected, I will follow the rule of law. A judge's job is to enforce the law as written by the legislature and to follow the precedents laid out by the appellate courts, not make the law, regardless of personal beliefs and opinions.

As a prosecutor, there were times when I believed a defendant was guilty of what they were accused of, but based upon evidentiary issues, I had to resolve the matter for a plea to a lesser offense. Pertaining to sentencing, there were times I felt the sentencing was either too lenient or too harsh for crimes for which a defendant was charged, but my position required me to seek an outcome that was based upon the law.

As a criminal defense attorney, I handle cases in which my clients turn their lives around and are living as productive citizens after committing a crime, but they still must face consequences for their previous actions. I have represented clients I believed were guilty of egregious crimes, but my role requires me to provide them with a zealous defense, regardless of my personal views.

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. Andrew Gibbons, District Public Defender, Second Judicial District, [REDACTED]

B. Ken Baldwin, District Attorney General (retired), First Judicial District, [REDACTED]

C. Jared Effler, District Attorney General, Eighth Judicial District & President of the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference, [REDACTED]

D. Johnny Blankenship, Carter County Circuit Court Clerk, [REDACTED]

E. Dr. Diana Bowers, Assistant Director of Schools and Human Resources Director, Carter County Schools, [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 Criminal Court 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: April 28, 2026.



Signature