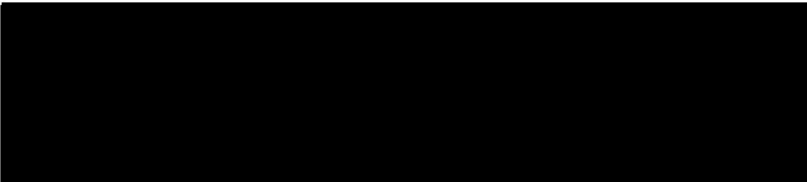


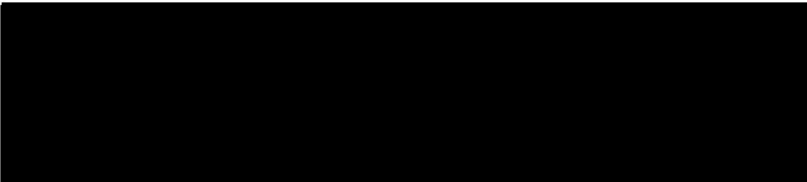
Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office
3/4/26

Name: Paul Hagerman

Office Address: 201 Poplar Avenue, 11th Floor
Office of the Shelby County District Attorney General
Memphis, Shelby County TN 38103

Office Phone: 901 222 1200 Facsimile: 901 222 7971

Email Address: 

Home Address: 

Home Phone: 

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.

Office of the Shelby County District Attorney, Shelby County Deputy District Attorney General.

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

Year: 1999 BPR 20110

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. BPR 20110. Licensed November 1, 1999. 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).

Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals, Law Clerk for Judge John Everett Williams, 1999-2000.

Baker, Donelson, Bearman and Caldwell, Associate Attorney, 2000-2002.

Shelby County District Attorney General, Prosecutor, 2002 to present.

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.

For the past 24 years I have been a prosecutor in the Office of the Shelby County District Attorney. During that time, I have solely practiced criminal law with a focus on violent crime. I am now the Deputy District Attorney General and supervise the Office, the attorneys and the day to day handling of all criminal cases.

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.

I have spent the vast majority of my career practicing in the Criminal Courts of Shelby County. I have been stationed in most every Criminal Court and, through the years, have tried jury trials in front of 15 different Criminal Court Judges. I have now tried just over 100 jury trials, including three capital cases, and have been stationed as a Division Leader in several of the courts. I now supervise the attorneys and others in the Office. Accordingly, I have deep experience in every aspect of the criminal process at 201 Poplar.

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

I have enjoyed my years in the District Attorney's Office and especially the opportunity to work as a team with other assistants on a wide variety of cases and projects. I owe so much to others, mentors like the late Judge John Everett Williams and now retired prosecutor Jerry Harris, but even more to fellow prosecutors and the many teammates who worked with me:

Gang Prosecutor: The majority of my time has focused on violent crime and gang prosecution. I have been the Chief of our Office's Gang Unit, the Chief of our Office's Organized Crime Unit and the Chief of the Crime Strategies Unit. I have tried notable cases against many gang leaders and have been the voice of many victim families.

Notable Litigations: I have personally, with my teammates, prosecuted several cases which were complex and of great public interest:

(a) **Holly Bobo Murder case.** This was quite possibly the most complicated criminal litigation in our State--unsolved for years, numerous recusals, terabytes of discovery, the involvement of numerous investigative agencies ranging from local departments to every Tennessee and Federal investigative agency as well a slew of private investigators and internet sleuths. This case culminated in a month-long capital trial in Savannah, TN, with the jury convicting Zachary Adams and sentencing him to life without parole and other consecutive sentences.

(b) **Lorenzen Wright Murder Case.** This was Memphis' most infamous cold-case. I worked with investigators to re-look at the case, drafted wiretaps and prosecuted the two defendants.

This case ended with a 30 year guilty plea for one defendant and then a two-week long trial in which Billy Turner was convicted and sentenced to life plus other consecutive sentences.

(c) **Liza Fletcher Murder case.** I worked with investigators from the day this terrible crime happened, to the discovery of her body, to a trial of the defendant on a separate violent case and then a guilty plea to life without parole and numerous other consecutive sentences.

(d) **Young Dolph Murder Case.** I handled the litigation of the two shooters in the case of the murder of Memphis celebrity Adolph Thornton, Jr.. I tried Justin Johnson, a local gang member, for his murder, and he was convicted receiving a life sentence plus other consecutive sentences. The other shooter testified in the case and received a 20 year sentence without parole;

(e) **Tyre Nichols Case.** This matter is still pending litigation, so I will simply write that, along with my team, this case has been an experience in hard battles and frustration but all the time inspired by the grace and strength of the victim's mother.

Innovation: I have had the opportunity to start several projects in the Office that were very important to me: First successful wiretap in Shelby County which dismantled a Gangster Disciple drug ring in Foote Homes; First successful homicide wiretaps in Shelby County; First prosecutor to be imbedded with Officers in the Memphis Police Department (Organized Crime 2006-2007); First prosecutor to file State RICO and State gang enhancement charges in Shelby County; began our Office's Nuisance Abatement program closing or re-purposing over 200 drug and gang houses in Shelby County; and began our Office's Anti-Trespassing Program.

Supervisory Role: I am now the Deputy District Attorney and supervise the Office and criminal prosecutions.

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

Perhaps my most enjoyable duty in my tenure with the DA's Office was as Supervising Prosecutor with the Memphis Police Department Undercover Unit (2006-2011). This assignment involved me in numerous undercover operations focused on drugs and gangs and resulted in numerous large-scale prosecutions. In so doing, I prosecuted defendants for large-scale drug conspiracies and related acts of violence, multiple individuals for attempting to kill police officers, and taught courses in relevant law, witness testimony and undercover operations, including with co-teacher former FBI agent Joe Pistone aka Donnie Brasco.

Two other areas of experience stand out in my years of service. The first is all the times, the conversations, difficult ones, with the victim families. These I still have in my present role, and many, not just a few, impact you forever. There are hard decisions to be made, hard talks to have, but I have learned to listen, to be open and to respect the moment. Second are the bonds made through hard cases and hard work, bonds with my fellow prosecutors and bonds with my law enforcement teammates. These bonds continue to inspire and inform my work.

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

None.

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.

Vanderbilt University, 1992-1996, BA Psychology, Summa Cum Laude.

NYU School of Law, 1996-1999, JD Law, Cum Laude, Florence Allen Scholar.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

1974.

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

All my life except for law school. Since law school (1999) to present.

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

26 years

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

Shelby

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.

None.

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.

None.

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.

Two criminal defendants filed some type of law suit/actions against me. The first was a defendant who pled guilty to a 16 year sentence on a variety of drug conspiracies. That representation was handled by the Attorney's General Office and was dismissed. He filed this action against me and against the Memphis police officers who handled the investigation. The second was a defendant who himself was a lawyer and pled guilty to a 30 year sentence for attempting to kill his wife. After he was denied parole, he sued everyone at the parole hearing including the parole board members themselves. That action was also dismissed.

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.

Uncontested and amicable divorce. No hearings. All by consent. September 2021.

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.

Memphis Bar Association. 2022 to present.

United States Tennis Association. 2004 to Present.

University Club of Memphis. 2013 to Present.

Memphis YMCA. 2021 to Present.

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.

No.

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.

Memphis Bar Association. 2022 to 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.

For the Holly Bobo prosecution, our Prosecution team won the Prosecutor of the Year Award from the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference. 2017.

I have received several commendations from the Memphis Police Department including for my work on two wiretap investigations (Operation Blue Star and Operation Clean Kennel) and for my work on the Lorenzen Wright murder re-investigation and prosecution (Operation Rebound).

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.

None.

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

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

I have made my career prosecuting cases at 201 Poplar and have never before felt called to apply for or seek to be Judge. I have been blessed for over two decades to work with my fellow prosecutors, day after day and case after case, and seek to fulfill the most simple, but most important, mission: Do what is right. I believe you put in the work with discipline, with adherence to the law, with judgement that can only be earned through experience, with humility and humor, but all the time battle-ready and battle-tested. No moment, no decision is too big for justice. This is the type of Judge that is needed and the type of Judge that I can be.

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)*

These are new Criminal Courts in Shelby County with a statutory focus on serious crimes. They will join nine other Criminal Courts and are needed to address the large number of violent cases pending. Serious criminal cases, on average, linger in the courts for over three years before disposition. That delay can amount to injustice on both sides and to the community at large. Judges are needed that are disciplined, that are guided by the law, that possess a strong sense of what is right and who have a deep understanding of the work required, its nuances and complexities. This has been my career. From handling docket in the Criminal Courts to some of the largest and most complex criminal trials in the State, I have worked hard and fair. I believe I can humbly, personably, and with judgement and discipline move cases toward resolution. I understand that when I am given a case that I am a servant of the law and of what is right.

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 started my work at 201 Poplar with Judge Jim Beasley. He was my first Judge and had gone to school here in Memphis with my father. He became a mentor and for two years I was stationed in his courtroom. And so I was well-prepared when I was promoted into the Gang Unit, but that promotion was directly into the fire. The case that I was given, week one, was a murder with the suspect having just been arrested--not just any suspect but a gang member who was reputed to be the hitman for his gang. As such he was the suspect in numerous homicides and was target number one for law enforcement. When I went to meet with detectives, TV cameras and the First 48 were there waiting. But within the first week of the case, I noticed problems, inconsistencies in the accounts and unsupported assumptions. One week in and in the next meeting I had to tell the detectives, supervisors and gang investigators, that the proof was not there, that this man, however bad, had to be released. I was met by angry voices and resistance, but what had to be was done. First week and I had just approved the release of a gang hitman. Ultimately, it was proven that this suspect had not committed the crime--his associates had, and I prosecuted them and they pled guilty. Shortly after, I worked with these same investigators, put together cases and prosecuted the same hitman on a series of crimes. He received an 80 year sentence for crimes that he did commit. Guided by the law, you just do what is right, even in the face of what is hard. This may mean standing up to people, or pressure, or accepting that the law is the law and must be followed despite your personal beliefs. A Judge does not rule, a Judge serves. And in all cases, the work is put in until the job is done.

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 John Campbell. Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals, [REDACTED]

B. Mike Scholl. The Scholl Law Firm, [REDACTED]

C. Mike Kenney. Of Counsel Lewis, Thomason. [REDACTED]

D. Chief Deputy Anthony Buckner. Shelby County Sheriff's Office, [REDACTED]

E. Karen Bobo. [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] Shelby County 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: July 12, 2026.


Signature



TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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