

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 am presently an Assistant Public Defender with the Office of the Shelby County Public Defender.

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

I was licensed in 2014. My BPR number is 33531

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.

I am only licensed in Tennessee under the same bar number of 33531. My status has been active since I was licensed in 2014.

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).

I have not.

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).

2025- Present Assistant Public Defender, Law Office of the Shelby County Public Defender

2021-2025 Associate, then Partner at The Law Office of Massey, McClusky, Fuchs & Ballenger

Practiced exclusively in criminal litigation across multiple jurisdictions within the State of Tennessee

2017-2021 Assistant Public Defender, Law Office of the Shelby County Public Defender.

2018 Briefly worked as Lyft and Uber driver to make additional funds

2015-2017 Associate at The Working Law Firm

Litigated mostly criminal matters with some civil trial matters

2015-2016 Worked as licensed online health insurance agent

2014 Operated a solo general law practice focused on criminal defense

2014 Bartender/Server at King's Palace Café and Tap Room

2014 Service Bartender at Houston's

2013 Backwaiter/Busser at Felicia Suzanne's

2012-2014 Law Clerk for Shelby County Criminal Court Judges

2011-2013 Front Desk Clerk at Wellworx gym

2012-2013 Summer Extern at Orion Federal Credit Union

Worked primarily on an expansion of membership application for Orion with the National Credit Union Association

2011-2012 Runner at The Law Office of Rainey, Kizer, Reviere, and Bell

Served subpoenas, assisted with Medicare Compliance review, delivered filings to various courts, and handled sorting of office mail

2009-2011 Cook/Server/Dishwasher at PDC Arts and Eats

2009-2010 Worked as summer help for HVAC company- Howe's Heating and Air

2007-2008 Busser and dishwasher at Perkins Restaurant in Jackson, Tennessee

2005-2007 Cook and Fountain worker at Sonic Drive-in in Huntingdon, Tennessee

2003-2004 Worked as potato sacker at West Tennessee Produce Company in Huntingdon, Tennessee

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.

Indigent criminal Defense makes up 100% of my current practice. I am a criminal trial lawyer, and criminal defense has been the main focus of my entire career.

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 practiced in General Sessions and Circuit Courts in several jurisdictions across Tennessee spanning from Memphis to Chattanooga. While the vast majority of my practice is criminal defense, I have appeared in Juvenile Courts, Chancery Courts, and Criminal Courts.

I have practiced at the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals off and on throughout my career, primarily in the Western Section.

The bulk of my experience is criminal trial work. I have tried cases in Shelby County, Tipton County, Fayette County, Henderson County, and Carroll County. I have tried multiple rape and murder cases, and I have extensive experience litigating high-level felony matters.

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

Notable appellate cases:

2023 *State of Tennessee v. Joseph Langlinais*, No. W2022-00317-CCA-R3-PC, 2023 WL 5286991 (Tenn. Crim. App., Mar. 7, 2023). Petitioner's convictions vacated due to ineffective assistance of trial, and case was remanded for a new trial based upon our appeal.

2017 *State of Tennessee v. Eric Washington aka Erik Brock*, No. W2016-00669-CCA-R3-CD, 2017 WL 3895153 (Tenn. Crim. App., Feb. 7, 2017). Violation of probation reversed and remanded due to inadmissible hearsay at the violation of probation hearing.

Notable trial court cases:

2023-2024 *State of Tennessee v. Angel Bumpass*. I began assisting on this matter while it was in the Motion for New Trial phase. William Massey and I litigated the Motion for New Trial, which was granted, vacating Angel's conviction for first-degree murder. We then proceeded as counsel on the new trial, and the charges were eventually dismissed. This matter was covered extensively by the television series "A&E's Accused: After the Verdict."

Recent notable trial results:

2025 *State of Tennessee v. Michael Ayala*, Shelby County Criminal Court Division VIII- aggravated rape/aggravated burglary trial- verdict of not guilty

State of Tennessee v. Joseph Middleton, Henderson County Circuit Court- case involving several a felony child sex counts- verdict of not guilty

2024 *State of Tennessee v. Norman Whittington*, Fayette County Circuit Court- domestic assault trial- verdict of not guilty

2023 *State of Tennessee v. Ashley Brown*, Weakley County Circuit Court- second-degree murder and aggravated assault trial- verdict of not guilty

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

I work extensively with the Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (TACDL) and am on the Board of Directors. I believe in continuing to grow my own experience as a practitioner and member of the bar, but I also believe in facilitating and teaching others in their practice. I have presented at CLEs for TACDL. I also lead a weekly case workshop at the Office of the Shelby County Public Defender, where I gather a team to help other trial attorneys prepare their cases for litigation/trial.

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

I have not submitted an application for a judicial position previously.

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.

2011-2014 University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law- Juris Doctor

Managing Editor of the Mental Health Law & Policy Journal

Received CALI Awards in Criminal Law and Tennessee Constitutional Law

2007-2011 Bethel University- B.S. degree in Business Administration with no minor.

Served as president for local fraternity Phi Delta Sigma

Was awarded Story of the Year by the Bethel Beacon as a staff writer for my coverage of the Financial Aid Office's treatment of international student loans

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

1989

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

My entire life- 37 years

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

I have resided in Shelby County since 2011 when I moved here for law school.

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

I am registered to vote in Shelby County.

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.

N/A

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.

I have never pled guilty or been convicted of anything other than minor traffic infractions such as speeding.

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.

To my knowledge, there are no pending investigations regarding me.

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.

Throughout my practice, I have had clients file complaints with the Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility through the consumer assistance program. I have not had a CAP complaint in recent years, but I am willing to request a full report from the Consumer Assistance Board to provide. I can say that no such complaint yielded action from the Board or toward my license.

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.

I do not have tax liens pending against me by federal, state, or local authorities that I am aware of.

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

I have never filed bankruptcy.

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 a party to my divorce in 2023-2024 in Shelby County Circuit Court. The docket number is CT-5079-23. The divorce was resolved uncontested, and the status shows as cost bill satisfied. My former spouse is an excellent co-parent, and we have not needed extensive

litigation regarding the dissolution of our marriage.

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.

Tennessee Bar Association- Member

Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers -Board of Directors

National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers- Member

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.

I have not belonged to organizations which limit membership to race, religion, or gender.

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.

Tennessee Bar Association- Member 2022-Present

Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers -Board of Directors from 2023-Present, Member since 2015

National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers- Member 2024-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.

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 am seeking this position because I believe in a fair, neutral application of the law that serves the community. I believe in being in and holding court for as long as it takes every day until the backlog of cases is cleared and until justice in our county is speedy and reliable. My policy as an attorney has always been to do whatever it takes to resolve cases that can be resolved as soon as they're able, especially if it means immediate relief for the parties. I plan to serve my community in the best way that I know how- by being fair, honest, and hard-working. I think most of my colleagues on both sides of counsel table would echo that I uphold those values daily, and I plan to just the same as judge if selected.

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 one of the new Criminal Court judgeships in Memphis. These courts oversee all criminal matters from all over Shelby County, ranging from low level misdemeanors all the way up to our most serious crimes. There are presently 9 Criminal Court Judges, and two more are being added by the legislature. My selection would bring a work ethic and a dedication to the law that many have publicly felt has been missing from our courts. One of the chief complaints I have seen is that judges come in late and leave early or just don't show up at all. I am committed to a full workday of getting the work done and getting the cases heard. I am a first-generation attorney, raised by a factory worker and a hair stylist. If anything, I know how to work the long hours and get it done.

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 am a firm believer that it is the judiciary's responsibility to uphold the law neutrally and

to interrupt the administration of the law only if there is unconstitutionality or illegality. As a criminal defense attorney, there have been several times that my clients' requests have run contrary both to the law and to my duty to the court. I do not honor such requests ever. I have had clients ask me to do things in the past that would violate the law or my duty to the court. Admittedly, there were times when it was tempting, purely because I believe in my duty to my client. However, I have never sacrificed my integrity or my duty to the United States and Tennessee Constitutions or to the courts, and I would never sacrifice the same as a judge. I believe my integrity and the law are co-existent and would remain so dedicated as a judge.

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. Hon. Chris Craft, Interim Judge of Shelby County Criminal Court Division VIII, [REDACTED]

B. Vincent Ores, Supervisor, The Office of the Shelby County Public Defender, Phone: [REDACTED]

C. Colin Johnson, District Attorney General, 27th Judicial District, [REDACTED]

D. Corey Brawner, Ph.D, Clinical Psychologist- Program Manager and Supervisor for Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program, Chemical Dependency Center, and Medication Assisted Treatment Clinic. Lt. Col. Luke Weathers Jr. Veteran Affairs Medical Center, [REDACTED]

E. Christopher Williams, M.A. Ministry, Assistant Director of Community Engagement, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, [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 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 13, 2026.



Signature



TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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NASHVILLE CITY CENTER

NASHVILLE, TN 37243