

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 currently serve as Deputy Criminal Chief/Assistant United States Attorney for the Department of Justice, United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Tennessee.

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

2008; TN BPR# 027646

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.

Not applicable.

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).

Legal Experience

- **United States Attorney's Office – Western District of Tennessee**
Deputy Criminal Chief – Firearms and Violent Crimes (January 2020 - present)
- **United States Attorney's Office – Western District of Tennessee**
Assistant United States Attorney (July 2014 - present)
- **Shelby County District Attorney General's Office – 30th Judicial District**
Assistant District Attorney General (September 2009 - July 2014)
- **The Claiborne Ferguson Law Firm**
Associate Attorney (July 2009 - August 2009)
- **Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals – The Honorable Judge Camille R. McMullen**
Judicial Law Clerk (August 2008 - June 2009)

Other professional experience

- **Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA) – Estival Housing Communities**
Case Manager (July 2003 - May 2004)
- **Shelby County Pretrial Services – Citizens’ Dispute**
Counselor B (September 2002 - June 2003)

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.

Currently, I serve as an Assistant United States Attorney representing the United States in criminal matters. One hundred percent of my practice consists of criminal law.

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.

Since July of 2014, I have been serving as an Assistant United States Attorney in the United States Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Tennessee. I lead investigations and prosecute violations of federal law involving firearms, violence, drug trafficking, immigration, and other federal offenses. I draft charging documents and pleadings, litigate motions, and conduct jury trials. I have tried over 20 federal jury trials. I have written over 15 appellate briefs and have argued before the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals on 4 occasions.

In January of 2020, I was promoted to serve as the Deputy Criminal Chief of the Firearms and Violent Crimes Prosecution Unit. As Deputy Chief, I supervise other Assistant United States Attorneys and support staff assigned to the Firearms and Violent Crimes Unit. I review and approve their proposed indictments, informations, plea agreements, and other case dispositions. I serve as the chief advisor to federal law enforcement agencies and multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional task forces regarding federal firearm and violent crime investigations and laws. I oversee the Project Safe Neighborhoods violent crime reduction initiative and other initiatives of the Department of Justice and of the United States Attorney’s Office. I also coordinate outreach, reentry, prevention, and intervention programs.

In September of 2009, I began my litigation career as an Assistant District Attorney at the Shelby County District Attorney’s Office. I started in the General Sessions Division where I prepared for and conducted criminal misdemeanor bench trials and negotiated plea agreements. I also conducted felony and misdemeanor preliminary hearings. In October of 2010, I was assigned to the Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit (“DV Unit”). While in the DV Unit, I was responsible for cases from arrest to disposition. The domestic violence related cases involved charges ranging from vandalism to murder. I was the only prosecutor who handled violations of orders of protection. In January of 2012, I was assigned to Criminal Court where I handled cases involving property crimes, voter fraud, drug trafficking, rape, robbery, murder, and other state offenses. I conducted legal research, drafted motions, and litigated motions involving various

state and federal case and statutory laws including constitutional issues. I have tried 19 jury trials in state court.

From July 2009 to August 2009, I was an associate attorney at the Claiborne Ferguson Law Firm. I practiced before Shelby County General Sessions, Circuit, Criminal, and Juvenile Courts. I represented clients at arraignments and guilty pleas in criminal matters. I negotiated dispositions with the Shelby County District Attorney's Office on behalf of defendants. I also conducted client interviews and consultations.

From August 2008 to June 2009, I served as a Judicial Law Clerk for the Honorable Camille R. McMullen of the Tennessee Court Criminal Appeals. After review of appellate briefs and trial court records, I drafted over twenty-five (25) judicial opinions. I researched various state and federal case and statutory laws including constitutional issues. I proofread and edited draft judicial opinions.

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

During the course of my legal career, I have litigated hundreds of criminal matters with varying degrees of complexity and charges. Majority of the cases that I have tried before a jury involved firearm and/or violent crime offenses. I have also litigated various suppression issues regarding constitutional law involving traffic stops, protective sweeps, the sufficiency of search warrants, *Miranda* warnings, and more. I also have worked with various types of witnesses at trial such as experts, cooperating co-defendants, and hostile witnesses.

In *United States v. Antonio Johnson, Travis Jackson, and Shalundra Johnson*, (2:19-cr-20172-SHL), the defendants were involved in the kidnapping of bank employees from their homes in order to rob three separate banks after hours on different occasions. Over \$600,000 was taken during the robberies. In one of the bank robberies, a bank employee was forced at gun point to open the bank and provide access to the cash while her small child was held hostage outside in a vehicle by another armed male. The defendants surveilled the bank employees and installed tracking devices on some of the employees' personal vehicles in order to learn their pattern of movement and where they lived. After a two-week jury trial, all defendants were found guilty. The evidence not only consisted of 32 witnesses, but it also involved complex technical evidence derived from tracking devices and the suspects' phone records. At trial, I was able to successfully admit expert testimony regarding the phone records that placed the defendants at the respective crime scenes and admit expert testimony regarding Travis Jackson's DNA. Each defendant had extensive sentencing hearings. Antonio Johnson was sentenced to 36 years imprisonment. Travis Jackson was sentenced to 45.3 years imprisonment. And, Shalundra Johnson was sentenced to 11.6 years imprisonment. I also handled the forfeiture proceedings where I was able to successfully argue that the vehicles seized during the investigation were used in the robbery or were obtained using the proceeds from the robbery.

In *United States v. Jamie Thomas*, (No: 2:14-20319-SHM), the defendant was prosecuted for illegally possession of a firearm as convicted felon. Officers were preparing to execute a

narcotics search warrant at Thomas's residence just before he drove away from the scene. Officers subsequently conducted a traffic stop. After an officer entered the passenger's side of the vehicle attempting to detain Thomas, Thomas drove off. He then jumped from the driver's seat of the moving vehicle while the officer was in the passenger seat. After the vehicle came to a stop, officers recovered a firearm in the vehicle. At a suppression hearing, I successfully defended Thomas's challenge of the constitutional basis of the initial traffic stop, the scope of the detention, and the demand by officers for Thomas to turn his vehicle's engine off. The matter went to trial before a jury. Thomas's girlfriend was a material witness that assisted with proving possession of the firearm. I had to secure an arrest warrant after she failed to appear for trial. After the girlfriend's arrest, she testified as a hostile witness and was compelled to testify under an immunity agreement. Thomas was found guilty and later sentenced to the maximum sentence of 120 months.

In *State of Tennessee v. Darius Jones*, (Criminal Court No. 12-01056), the defendant shot and killed his girlfriend in front of her mother after forcing his girlfriend inside of a residence. Jones then held two children hostage during a subsequent standoff with law enforcement. At trial, I was able to admit proof of past threats and assaults to prove premeditation. As a defense, Jones testified that the firearm accidentally discharged as the victim's mother grabbed his arm while he was holding the firearm near the victim. Jones was convicted by a jury of second degree murder, first degree felony murder, especially aggravated kidnapping, reckless endangerment, and two counts of aggravated kidnapping. The trial court sentenced the defendant to life imprisonment on the murder conviction consecutive to a total effective sentence of forty-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days on the remaining counts.

In *State of Tennessee v. Luis Guillen*, (Criminal Court No. 10-04491), the defendant assaulted, raped, and held his girlfriend against her will over the course of approximately four days. It was difficult to prepare the victim to face Guillen at trial. The victim also needed a Spanish interpreter. During trial, expert witness testimony was admitted regarding the injuries sustained by the victim. Another expert also was able to testify about psychological trauma that disrupts the victim's normal cognitive functions after a sexual assault to aid in the explanation of the victim's actions after the assault. After being found guilty of one count of aggravated rape and one count of aggravated kidnapping by the jury, Guillen was sentenced to a total effective sentence of 35 years.

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

As I oversee all Firearms and Violent Crimes prosecutions at the U.S. Attorney's Office, I am also the chief advisor to various law enforcement agencies/task forces with respect to constitutional and statutory issues. I have been fortunate to not have any evidence suppressed in federal court based on guidance that I have personally provided to law enforcement. This is a testament to my understanding of constitutional law. In my role as Deputy Chief, I have reviewed thousands of firearm and violent crime cases for possible federal prosecutions—evaluating the legality of law enforcement actions and the sufficiency of evidence.

During the historic on-going Memphis Safe Task Force Initiative where a significant number of law enforcement officers are working in Memphis to reduce violent crime, I coordinate all federal prosecutions for the United States Attorney's Office. I authorize charges and assign cases to over 35 attorneys. To assist with the increased caseload as it relates to this initiative, twenty Special Assistant United States Attorneys (SAUSAs) were assigned to our office. I served as an instructor at the Department of Justice's National Advocacy Center in Columbia, South Carolina to train the SAUSAs regarding detention and sentencing hearings prior to their arrival.

In March of 2026, I was the designated Assistant United States Attorney to provide legal guidance to the United States Secret Service and to initiate federal charges against anyone who committed crimes in connection with the President of the United States's visit to Memphis.

I serve as the Chairman of the Federal Reentry Council for the Western District of Tennessee. The group consists of representatives from the United States District Court, United States Attorney's Office, Federal Defender's Office, United States Pretrial and Probation Office, and Bureau of Prisons. The council identifies barriers for those reentering into society after incarceration and assists in removing those barriers. The council identifies other agencies that can assist and provide services to those that have been incarcerated. For example, we partnered with the Department of Safety to assist those that are being released from federal prison in Tennessee to obtain their Tennessee Identification or Driver's License. In another example, we sponsored and conducted Reentry Simulation events. The simulations allow participants from the community to take on the role of a person who has been released from prison and navigate through the system to obtain basic needs such as housing, identification, job, transportation, court compliance, etc.

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.

The University of Memphis, Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law (August 2005 – May 2008)

Juris Doctor

Honors:

- Best Memorandum Award, Legal Methods I
- CALI Award for Academic Excellence, Elder Law Clinic

- Finalist, 2008 Mock Trial Competition
- Quarter-Finalist, 2007 Mock Trial Competition
- Quarter-Finalist, 2007 Freshman Moot Court Competition

Activities:

- Student Academic Curriculum Committee
- Orientation Leader/Student Ambassador
- Parliamentarian (2007-2008), Black Law Student Association
- President (2006-2007), Sports and Entertainment Law Society
- Vice-President (2005-2006), Sports and Entertainment Law Society

The University of Memphis (1998 – 2002)

Bachelor of Arts, May 2002

Major: Criminology and Criminal Justice

Minor: Legal Thought

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

■■■■■ 1980

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

I have lived in Tennessee my entire life.

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

I have lived in Shelby County my entire life.

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

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.

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.

Not applicable.

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.

- Cordova Community Center, Board Member (2019 - present)
- Greater Community Temple COGIC, 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.

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.

Not applicable.

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.

- Spirit of Excellence Award in 2017, 2020, 2025; awarded by the managers of the United States Attorney's Office for my exceptional work in firearm and violent crime prosecutions.
- United States Attorney's Award in 2023; the highest honor given by United States Attorney for achievement at the highest level for my work and advice to the United States Attorney on firearm and violent crime policy.
- Certificate of Appreciation, Memphis and Shelby County Juvenile Court in 2021; awarded for my work with the Juvenile Ceasefire Program—an prevention and intervention program to help keep juveniles from committing gun crimes and returning to the criminal justice system.
- Multi-Agency Gang Unit Award in 2019; awarded by the Memphis and Shelby County Multi-Agency Gang Unit for providing outstanding legal guidance and training in gang investigations and prosecutions.
- Letter of Commendation, Memphis Police Department in 2018; awarded by the Memphis Police Department for developing cases derived from cutting-edge ballistic technology (National Integrated Ballistic Information Network).
- Extra Mile Award in 2015; award based on nominations from my peers at the United States Attorney's Office for professionalism, respect for others, diligence in job performance, and contribution to office harmony and unity.

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)*

All public servants, especially in the judiciary, must maintain a high degree of professionalism, competence, and moral character. I exhibit these traits and more. My experience involving the litigation of violent crime cases in state and federal court has prepared me for such a time as this. My commitment to the rule of law and its fair administration is strong. I have been called to be a public servant, and I want to use my skills to serve the community where I have lived my entire 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 one of the two judicial positions created in the Shelby County Criminal Court –

30th Judicial District. The criminal court sits in Memphis, Tennessee where there are currently nine divisions. The increase in the number of divisions, especially to handle violent crime cases, will expedite justice for all that are involved. Upon assuming the bench, I will ensure that the wheels of justice move without unnecessary delay while having the patience and courage to give each case its proper consideration. All parties, witnesses, court personnel, and observers will also be respected while I am on the bench. I want to make an impact on the perception of the courts where the people of Shelby County will always have confidence in their judicial system.

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)*

Yes. There is no question that I will uphold the law even if I disagree with it. My role as a judge would be to interpret and apply the law to the facts. It is the legislature's role to create or change the law. One example of my ability to follow the law despite my personal beliefs involves federal drug prosecutions. In some federal drug prosecutions, there may be an instance when I disagree with the application of a mandatory minimum sentence due to the amount of drugs involved. I believe that the mandatory minimum sentence may be too harsh for the facts and circumstances of the case and takes some discretion from the judge. I, however, continue to faithfully discharge my duties as an Assistant United States Attorney and pursue those violations of the law. Similarly, I would faithfully discharge my duties as a criminal court judge as the law mandates.

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. D. Michael Dunavant, U.S. Attorney for Western District of Tennessee; [REDACTED]

B. Edward L. Stanton III, Partner at Butler Snow LLP; [REDACTED]

C. Juni Ganguli; Partner at Ganguli & Hall; [REDACTED]

D. Bishop Brandon B Porter, Senior Pastor at Greater Community Temple COGIC; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

E. Carol Ann Burns; Real Estate Agent at Crye-Leike Inc.; [REDACTED]

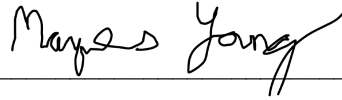
AFFIRMATION CONCERNING APPLICATION

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 11, 20 26.



Signature



TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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