Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission

Application for Nomination to Judicial Office

1/17/23

Name: Lora Denise Fowler

Office Address: (including county)

Office Phone: Facsimile:

Email Address: [redacted]

Home Address: [redacted]

County

(including county)

Home Phone: [redacted] Cellular Phone: [redacted]

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 have been unemployed since April 14, 2025

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

2001/ BPR # 021474

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.

TN 2001- BPR # 021474

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).

Shelby County District Attorney's Office

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 my entire career, I have only practiced 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.

8. As a licensed attorney in good standing with the Tennessee Bar since 2001, I have over two decades of extensive experience practicing in trial courts. Throughout my career, I have served as a prosecuting attorney in a broad range of criminal cases, including violent crimes, domestic violence, drug offenses, and complex felony matters. I have handled all stages of criminal prosecution—from case assessment and charging decisions to preliminary hearings, motion practice, plea negotiations, and jury and bench trials. I have examined and cross-examined hundreds of witnesses, collaborated with law enforcement and victim advocacy groups, and consistently upheld the highest standards of legal ethics and courtroom professionalism. My years of litigation experience have provided me with a strong command of trial procedures, rules of evidence, and courtroom advocacy.

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

One of the most intense trials of my career involved a first-degree murder case that required extraordinary hours and heightened vigilance. On the final day of testimony, extensive arguments over the admissibility of certain evidence caused the trial to extend well past midnight. We completed all testimony in the early hours of Saturday morning and had to return to court by 9:00 a.m. that same day to deliver closing arguments and proceed with jury instructions.

After the jury retired and returned with a guilty verdict, it was discovered that the defendant—who had been out on bond throughout the trial—had left the courthouse and could not be located. A warrant was issued, and he remained at large for approximately two months before being found and taken into custody. Following sentencing to life in prison, the jail mistakenly released him, citing a clerical error. He was again missing for another couple of months before being apprehended a second time to begin serving his sentence.

During both periods when the defendant was at large, my co-counsel and I exercised heightened caution when walking between the courthouse and the parking garage, uncertain of his whereabouts or whether he might attempt contact. The case was a powerful reminder of the unpredictable nature of criminal trials and the personal risks that can accompany the pursuit of justice.

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

None

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

I submitted my application earlier this year for the judicial vacancy in Division VII of the General Sessions Criminal Court.

EDUCATION

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

University of Memphis, Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law
Juris Doctor, 2001
Attended: 1998–2001

Northwestern University
Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Anthropology, 1998
Attended: 1994–1998

Dean's Award for Excellence – Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

CALI Award – Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

PERSONAL INFORMATION

13. State your date of birth.

July 18, [redacted]

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

26 years

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

26 years

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

Shelby

17. 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

18. 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

19. 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

20. 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.

None

21. 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.

Not to my knowledge

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

No

23. 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

24. 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.

Frayser Parent Teacher Student Association

Frayser Community Development Organization Board – Board Secretary 2021

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated

Restoration Time Ministries Board

I Am She Board

Member of Holy City COGIC

25. 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 am affiliated with NBPA (National Black Prosecutor's Association) I was once a paying member but now I only participate in charitable events and no longer a paying member. Although it's a black prosecutor's association, it is not limited to African Americans. All are welcome if you are in law enforcement, part of a prosecutor's or similar office.

ACHIEVEMENTS

26. 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

National Black Prosecutor's Association

Tennessee Bar Association

27. 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.

Tennessee Bar Association Legal Leadership Program

Civic Hero Award

Community Service Award

Outstanding Attorney Award

28. 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.

General Sessions Criminal Court Division VII vacancy- you had to be appointed by the County Commission first then run for the position next year – I believe that I applied in early February 2025

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

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

As a seasoned trial attorney with over two decades of experience in the Shelby County District Attorney's Office, I have devoted my career to upholding justice with integrity, fairness, and a deep respect for the rule of law. I am seeking the Criminal Court Division I position to continue serving our community at a higher level—ensuring that every individual who enters the courtroom is treated with dignity and that the law is applied impartially. My extensive background in prosecuting complex criminal cases, mentoring youth, and collaborating with civic organizations has prepared me to lead with wisdom and compassion. I am committed to protecting public safety while also promoting fairness and accountability in the criminal justice system. This role is not just a professional progression—it is a calling to serve justice with the experience, judgment, and dedication our citizens deserve.

30. 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)***

Shelby County Criminal Court, located in Memphis, Tennessee, consists of nine divisions that handle all types of felony and certain misdemeanor criminal cases. Division I, the position I am seeking, manages a broad range of cases—from violent offenses and drug trafficking to theft and white-collar crime. The court's high volume and serious nature of cases demand experienced, principled leadership.

With over 20 years as a prosecutor in Shelby County, I bring deep knowledge of the law, extensive courtroom experience, and a strong commitment to justice. I understand the importance of fairness, efficiency, and treating every individual with dignity.

My selection would bring seasoned trial experience, a proven work ethic, and an unwavering

dedication to impartiality. I am committed to upholding the law with integrity and strengthening public trust in our criminal justice system.

31. 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, I will. One example I can point to is the current expungement laws. Under these laws, certain convictions, such as DUIs and certain felony drug offenses, are ineligible for expungement. I've participated in numerous expungement clinics, and it truly saddens me to see elderly individuals who still need to work for a living but are unable to have offenses from over 20 years ago expunged. These offenses often occurred when they were younger, and they've since completely turned their lives around. While I empathize deeply, I am still bound by the law and must advise them accordingly.

REFERENCES

32. 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. Regenia Dowell, Retired [redacted] Frayser Community Member, Board Member of the Frayser CDC

B. Shelley Rice, Retired [redacted] Frayser CDC Board Member, Former President of the Frayser Exchange Club

C. Stephen Shular, Community Outreach University of Memphis School of Public Health [redacted]

D. Glen Baity, Retired Assistant District Attorney [redacted]

E. William Gibbons, Executive Director Public Safety Institute [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] Criminal Court Division I_____ 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: May 24_____, 2025_____.

Lola Lowe
Signature

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

TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
511 UNION STREET, SUITE 600
NASHVILLE CITY CENTER
NASHVILLE, TN 37219

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

WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY

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

Lora Denise Fowler

Type or Print Name

Lora Fowler

Signature

May 24, 2025

Date

021474

BPR #

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