

Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office

1/17/23

Name: Ronald J. Dowdy

Office Address: 222 2nd Avenue N, Suite 500, Nashville, Davidson County, TN 37201
(including county) _____

Office Phone: 615-862-5500 Facsimile: _____

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Home Address: [REDACTED]
(including county) _____

Home Phone: N/A 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.

Assistant District Attorney, Office of the District Attorney General for the 20th Judicial District

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

2009. TBPR #028572

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 #028572

Florida #86456. My license is inactive. As a state prosecutor in Tennessee, I am unable to practice law in another jurisdiction.

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).

My license is currently inactive in Florida. When I practiced law in Florida, my license in Tennessee was inactive. As a state prosecutor in Florida, I was unable to practice law in any other jurisdiction.

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 District Attorney, Office of the District Attorney General 20th Judicial District – July 2017 to Present

Assistant State Attorney, Office of the Miami-Dade State Attorney – Miami, FL March 2010 to July 2017

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 exclusively practice criminal law. I am currently the Team Leader of the Crimes Against Children Division ("CAC") of the Nashville District Attorney's Office. This team consists of thirteen professionals, including seven experienced prosecutors and three criminal investigators.

I oversee the investigation and prosecution of crimes involving child victims. This includes prosecution of child death and cases where a child has been physically or sexually abused, neglected, or endangered. CAC also prosecutes internet crimes against children such as solicitation of a minor, revenge porn, and the creation, distribution, and sell of child sexual abuse material.

Although I am primarily a trial attorney, as CAC Team Leader I also collaborate with key stakeholders within Davidson County to ensure that crimes against children are effectively tracked and prevented when possible. For example, I regularly meet with leaders and advocates working to investigate and prevent child abuse such as the Davidson County Child Death Review Panel and the leadership for partner members of the Child Protective Investigation Team. The purpose of these meetings is to foster collaboration, develop systematic changes, and implement best practices.

Additionally, I routinely advise child abuse detectives at the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department on charging decisions during active investigations. This requires me to analyze whether a judge or grand jury, from a position of neutrality, will find probable cause when applying the law to the facts presented.

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 been a trial attorney since I began my career at the State Attorney's Office in Miami, FL. After training, I asked to be placed in the Domestic Violence Unit. After approximately a dozen jury trials, I was elevated to the Juvenile Court team where I handled all cases in which a juvenile had been charged with a misdemeanor or a felony. Next, I prosecuted serious felonies involving adults in criminal court. I also served on the Human Trafficking Task Force before being selected for assignment in the highly competitive Public Corruption Unit where I was part of a task force that conducted proactive investigations and prosecutions of public officials.

I left the State Attorney's Office in 2017 to join the Office of the District Attorney General in Nashville. I was assigned to the Crimes Against Children division shortly after joining the office. I have also been assigned to Criminal Court Division III – the same court for which I am applying to fill a judicial vacancy. In 2022, I was selected to be Team Leader of the Domestic Violence Division, and, in 2023, I became Team Leader of the Crimes Against Children Division. I have held the latter position since then.

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

State of Tennessee v. Travis Reinking, 2019-A-55, Davidson County, TN

The 'Waffle House shooter' who was convicted of multiple counts of first-degree murder by jury after he pled not guilty by reason of insanity.

State of Tennessee v. Andrew Delke, 2019-A-26, Davidson County, TN

Metro Nashville Police Department officer who pled guilty to voluntary manslaughter for an on-duty shooting.

State of Tennessee v. Gregory Livingston, 2021-03582, Shelby County, TN

Kroger security guard convicted by jury of first-degree murder.

State of Florida v. Ivan Valdes, F-16-019588, Miami-Dade County, FL

Miami International Airport director convicted for \$5,000,000 fraud scheme.

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

Not applicable.

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.

Howard University, B.S. Political Science, 2006

University of Tennessee College of Law, Juris Doctorate, 2009

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

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

29 years; 1984 – 2002 (18 years), 2006 – 2009 (3 years), 2017 – present (8 years)

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

26 years (2017 – present; 1984 – 2002)
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15. State the county in which you are registered to vote.

Davidson

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.

None.

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.

The Mary Parrish Center, Board Member 2023 – present

The Mary Parish Center is a non-profit organization that provides shelter and resources to survivors of domestic violence.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Member

The Boyz 615, Inc., Member

The Boyz 615, Inc. is a non-profit community service organization that conducts youth programs in the Nashville area and provides scholarships to students enrolled in college who are in need of financial assistance.

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.

Alpha Phi Alpha, Fraternity, Inc.

Membership is limited to men. I joined the fraternity in 2004 and have been an active graduate member. I do not intend to resign my membership because the purpose of the organization aligns with my own values of education, leadership, and community service.

Gentlemen of Drew Social Club

Membership is limited to men enrolled at Howard University. I joined the organization in 2002. I have not been an active member since I graduated college.

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

Napier Looby Bar Association, Member

National Black Prosecutors Association, Chapter President 2024 to present

Harry Phillips American Inn of Court, Program Committee (responsible for selecting and organization programming for members)

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.

Tennessee Bar Association Leadership Law

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)*

Before I ever met an attorney, I daydreamed of being in a courtroom as a child in the outfield at my baseball games. As a young person, I witnessed others around me suffer from injustice. Some had been victims who were left disheartened by their offender's lack of accountability. Others were defendants who received unduly harsh treatment despite their potential for rehabilitation. In these instances, the judicial system failed to meet the needs of the community. This happens far too often.

During my career, I have tried my best to be judicious in the application of law, balancing toughness with empathy. I will continue to strike this balance as a judge by thoughtfully applying the law to the facts and clearly explaining my decisions so that all parties will know they are being treated fairly. I believe this instills faith in our system and thereby makes our community safer.

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 applying to fill the vacancy in the Criminal Court for the 20th Judicial District, Division III. The court presides over criminal matters in Davidson County, Tennessee.

Nashville is my home by birth and by choice. I went to law school with the plan to become a public defender in Nashville but graduating during a recession led me to Miami where I found a great sense of purpose in fighting for victims. I moved back to Nashville because I wanted my hard work and sense of justice to benefit my hometown. Our system demands that judges account for a victim's harms as well as the mitigating circumstances that led a defendant to criminal activity. I will bring my professional experiences and perspective with me to the bench so defendants, lawyers, victims, and constituents leave knowing that Division III is a place where the law is fairly applied.

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 will. As an Assistant State Attorney in Miami, I prosecuted an elderly lady with no history who had been arrested for delivering heroin. The charge carried a 15-year mandatory minimum prison sentence. The law did not permit the judge to exercise discretion in sentencing. At the time there was insufficient evidence to charge her grandson, who was the investigation's target. She had willingly participated in the conspiracy and refused to cooperate against any of her co-conspirators. It was difficult to send this grandmother, who looked much like my own, to prison for such a long time but it was mandated by law. So, I followed the law and it was the right thing to do.

As another example, in the Nashville District Attorney's Office I prosecuted a defendant with a very violent history for committing homicide. Just weeks before the trial the only eyewitness, an innocent bystander, told me through tears that she would not testify out of fear. She was a single mom who lived in the same impoverished neighborhood as the defendant. There was no option to provide her with real safety or protection against retaliation. Instead, upon my request the judge issued a material witness warrant requiring her to be taken into custody until she testified. Because I forced her to tell the jury the truth, the defendant was found guilty and is now serving a life sentence. The witness was not happy, but she thanked me when she learned of the verdict.

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.

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| A. Glenn R. Funk, District Attorney General, 20 th Judicial District |
| B. Martesha Johnson Moore, Chief Public Defender, 20 th Judicial District |
| C. Eric Drake, Chief of Police, Metropolitan Nashville Police Department |
| D. Dawn Harper, Executive Director, Nashville Children's Alliance |
| E. Dwayne Tucker, Interim-President, Tennessee State University |

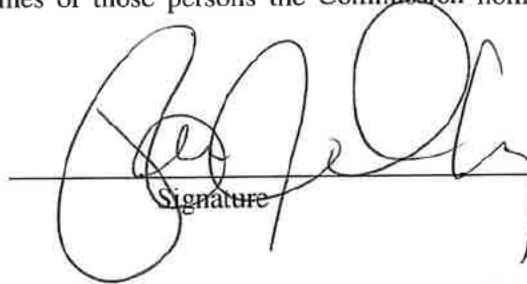
AFFIRMATION CONCERNING APPLICATION

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 III, 20th Judicial District 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: June 24, 2025.


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

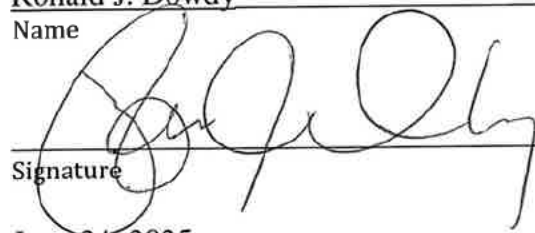
WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY

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.

Ronald J. Dowdy

Name


Signature

June 24, 2025

Date

028572

BPR #

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

Florida Bar #86456