

FILED

04/24/2026

Clerk of the
Appellate Courts

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF TENNESSEE
AT KNOXVILLE

Assigned on Briefs April 1, 2026

**STEVEN R. POWELL v. KNOXVILLE TVA
EMPLOYEES CREDIT UNION**

**Appeal from the Chancery Court for Washington County
No. 25-CV-0105 John C. Rambo, Chancellor**

No. E2026-00463-COA-T10B-CV

This is an interlocutory appeal as of right filed pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 10B by the defendant below, Steven R. Powell, regarding his motion for recusal of the chancellor. Having reviewed the petition for recusal appeal, we determine it to be fatally deficient. We therefore dismiss the appeal.

**Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10B Interlocutory Appeal as of Right;
Appeal Dismissed**

THOMAS R. FRIERSON, II, J., delivered the opinion of the court, in which W. NEAL MCBRAYER and STEVEN W. MARONEY, JJ., joined.

Steven R. Powell, Johnson City, Tennessee, Pro Se.

Matthew Wayne Graves, Knoxville, Tennessee, for the appellee, Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union.

OPINION

On March 31, 2026, Mr. Powell filed with this Court an “Accelerated Interlocutory Appeal as of Right Pursuant to [Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 10B] for Recusal Appeal.” In the petition, Mr. Powell stated that on January 12, 2026, he had filed a motion with the Washington County Chancery Court (“trial court”) seeking the chancellor’s recusal in the underlying action. According to Mr. Powell, the basis for the recusal motion was an “appearance of partiality” created by the chancellor’s rulings and alleged in-court statements that were adverse to Mr. Powell. The trial court entered an order denying the recusal motion on March 11, 2026, having determined that the motion failed to comply with the requirements of Rule 10B.

Following our review of the petition and attachments, we determine that our disposition of this matter does not require an answer, additional briefing, or oral argument, and we therefore elect to act summarily on this appeal in accordance with sections 2.05 and 2.06 of Rule 10B. *See* Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10B, § 2.05 (“If the appellate court, based upon its review of the Petition for recusal appeal and supporting documents, determines that no answer from the other parties is needed, the court may act summarily on the appeal. Otherwise, the appellate court shall order that an answer to the petition be filed by the other parties. The court, in its discretion, also may order further briefing by the parties within the time period set by the court.”), § 2.06 (“An accelerated interlocutory appeal shall be decided by the appellate court on an expedited basis. The appellate court’s decision, in the court’s discretion, may be made without oral argument.”).

We recognize that “[p]ro se litigants who invoke the complex and sometimes technical procedures of the courts assume a very heavy burden.” *Irvin v. City of Clarksville*, 767 S.W.2d 649, 652 (Tenn. Ct. App. 1988). Parties proceeding without benefit of counsel are “entitled to fair and equal treatment by the courts,” but we “must not excuse pro se litigants from complying with the same substantive and procedural rules that represented parties are expected to observe.” *Hessmer v. Hessmer*, 138 S.W.3d 901, 903 (Tenn. Ct. App. 2003).

This Court has repeatedly held that when an accelerated interlocutory appeal is filed concerning recusal, the requirements of Rule 10B must be strictly followed. *See Johnston v. Johnston*, No. E2015-00213-COA-T10B-CV, 2015 WL 739606, at *2 (Tenn. Ct. App. Feb. 20, 2015) (“We emphasize . . . that the accelerated nature of these interlocutory appeals as of right requires meticulous compliance with the provisions of Rule 10B regarding the content of the record provided to this Court so as to allow this Court to meet its obligations under section 2.06 of the rule, which requires this Court to decide these appeals ‘on an expedited basis.’”); *Elliott v. Elliott*, No. E2012-02448-COA-10B-CV, 2012 WL 5990268, at *3 (Tenn. Ct. App. Nov. 30, 2012) (“[I]t is imperative that litigants file their petitions for recusal appeal in compliance with the mandatory requirements of Rule 10B in the first instance.”). Rule 10B mandates that a petition for recusal appeal “shall be accompanied by a copy of the motion and all supporting documents filed in the trial court, a copy of the trial court’s order or opinion ruling on the motion, and a copy of any other parts of the trial court record necessary for a determination of the appeal.” Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10B, § 2.03 (emphasis added).

Here, Mr. Powell has failed to provide this Court with a copy of his recusal motion filed in the trial court.¹ As this Court has previously recognized, a copy of the recusal

¹ Mr. Powell states in his 10B petition that he has appealed from the trial court’s “March 11, 2026 order denying his Motion for Recusal of the Honorable John C. Rambo.” The March 11, 2026 order specifically references and adjudicates a motion to recuse filed on January 12, 2026, and a motion to rule on the recusal motion, which was filed in February 2026. The January 12, 2026 recusal motion was not included in the appellate record provided by Mr. Powell. Mr. Powell also references an amended motion for recusal that

motion is an “essential component[] of a recusal appeal.” *See Bradfield v. Thoman*, No. W2025-01416-COA-T10B-CV, 2025 WL 2754056, at *2 (Tenn. Ct. App. Sept. 29, 2025). *See also Rose v. Lakeway Med. Profs. P’ship*, No. E2025-00335-COA-T10B-CV, 2025 WL 819986, at *3 (Tenn. Ct. App. Mar. 14, 2025) (“Because Appellants have not provided this Court with a copy of the motion to recuse or any documents filed in support thereof, we are unable to determine whether Appellants satisfied the requirements of Rule 10B, section 1.01. Thus, we are unable to determine whether the trial court erred in denying Appellants’ motion to recuse.”). Inasmuch as Mr. Powell has failed to provide us with a copy of his recusal motion filed in the trial court, we cannot review the propriety of the trial court’s denial of the motion, and we are constrained to dismiss the appeal.

We acknowledge that in his petition for recusal appeal, Mr. Powell also takes issue with other orders entered by the trial court. However, “[i]n a Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 10B appeal, the only order we may review is the trial court’s order that denies a motion to recuse. Pursuant to the rule, we may not review the correctness or merits of the trial court’s other rulings[.]” *Duke v. Duke*, 398 S.W.3d 665, 668 (Tenn. Ct. App. 2012).

For the foregoing reasons, we dismiss the petition for recusal appeal. Based on this dismissal, we further determine that Mr. Powell’s motion to supplement the appendix is pretermitted as moot. The costs of this appeal are assessed against the appellant, Steven R. Powell.

s/Thomas R. Frierson, II

THOMAS R. FRIERSON, II, JUDGE

was allegedly filed in March 2026; however, Mr. Powell has provided no order addressing that amended motion, and he acknowledges in his filings that the trial court had not yet ruled on the amended motion by the time this accelerated interlocutory appeal was filed. Accordingly, we have no jurisdiction to address the March 2026 amended motion in this appeal.