

Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office

1/17/23

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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.

Middle Tennessee Law Group
d/b/a Wolaver, Carter & Heffington

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

Licensed: 2014
BPR #032752

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 – BPR #032752 – Licensed: 2014 – Status: Active

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).

- November 2014 – Present: Middle Tennessee Law Group d/b/a Wolaver, Carter & Heffington (From 2014 to 2016 the firm was Tisher, Wolaver, Free, Carter & Lynn. In October 2016, Middle Tennessee Law Group d/b/a Wolaver, Carter & Heffington was formed). My firm is located in Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee.
- January 2016 – Present: My law partners, Jake Wolaver and Patrick Carter, and I own commercial properties. A portion of one of the properties is utilized as our law office, and other properties are utilized as rental units.
- April 2014 – November 2014: Associate Attorney with Woodard Law Firm in Franklin, Williamson County, Tennessee.

- November 2012 – April 2014: Legal Assistant with Woodard Law Firm in Franklin, Williamson County, Tennessee.
- June 2011 – November 2012: Unemployed while in law school.
- September 1998 – June 2011: Maury Regional Medical Center, Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee. During my twelve- and one-half years of employment at Maury Regional Medical Center, I was employed as a nurse in various departments of the hospital, including the recovery room, emergency department, and orthopedics. However, during the majority of my nursing career, I worked in labor and delivery and women's services.

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.

Because of my nursing background and medical knowledge, a large portion of my practice involves medical related litigation. At this time, approximately 50% of my practice is dedicated to personal injury defense, representing insureds of Tennessee Farmers Mutual Insurance Company.

Approximately 30% of my practice is related to domestic relations, including divorce and post-divorce matters.

I have three (3) children that are adopted – two (2) internationally adopted and one (1) domestically adopted. Consequently, adoption is near and dear to my heart, and roughly 10% of my practice is devoted to adoption.

Wills/Estates/Probate comprise approximately 8% of my practice.

Lastly, the remaining portion of my practice, averaging 2%, involves personal injury litigation representing plaintiffs.

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 had the privilege of representing many clients in legal matters in Chancery Court, Circuit Court, Juvenile Court, and General Sessions. Over the course of my career, I have conducted countless bench trials in Chancery Court covering a broad range of legal matters, including divorce, child custody, modification of child support and alimony, contested conservatorships, and termination of parental rights.

In Circuit Court, I have had the opportunity to file and argue numerous motions for summary

judgment, which I find to be a particularly enjoyable part of my practice. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to represent clients in a jury trial involving personal injuries.

In Juvenile Court, I have participated in various bench trials while representing prospective adoptive parents in termination of parental rights actions, and other clients in custody related matters. Additionally, I have participated in bench trials in General Sessions Court involving landlord/tenant disputes, property damage claims, and other general matters.

I have had the opportunity to argue cases before the Tennessee Court of Appeals, including *In Re: Gunner F.*, M2016-01650-COA-R3-JV; and *Barrera, et al v. Bob Parks, et al.*, M2020-01027-COA-R3-JV. In both matters, I was able to obtain a positive resolution for my clients.

Due to the nature of my practice, mediation is a large aspect of case resolution. A significant percentage of my cases, particularly personal injury matters, are successfully resolved in mediation.

Since March 2015, I have served as the Trustee for a trust account arising from an estate in Cheatham County. The nature of my involvement has varied widely based on the needs of the beneficiaries of the trust. For instance, I have assisted with everything from negotiating health insurance coverage to payment of veterinarian bills.

Lastly, I am admitted to practice in U.S. District Court Middle District of Tennessee.

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

None.

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

- Tennessee Bar Association Leadership Law (TBALL) – Class of 2022
- Rule 31 Listed Family Mediator – 2022
- Rule 31 Listed Civil Mediator – 2023
- Leadership Maury – Class of 2016

The above-listed programs and courses have further prepared me with the requisite skills and knowledge to better serve the 22nd Judicial District.

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

I have never submitted an application for a state or federal judicial position.

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.

- Nashville School of Law
February 2010 – December 2013
Graduated
Degree: Doctor of Jurisprudence
Received prestigious Moot Court Award for outstanding presentation and performance.
- Middle Tennessee State University
January 1999 – May 2004
Graduated
Degree: Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Columbia State Community College
June 1996 – May 1998
Graduated
Degree: Associate of Applied Science in Nursing
May 1998 – January 1999: Continued taking courses after graduation in preparation to transfer to Middle Tennessee State University.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

1976

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

I have lived continuously in Tennessee since birth.

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

I have lived in Maury County since 2008 (15 years). Prior to that date, I resided in Lawrence

County since the age of two (2) years.

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

I am registered to vote in Maury County, Tennessee.

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.

I have never pled guilty to or been convicted of a violation of any law, regulation, or ordinance.

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, I am not currently under investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute or disciplinary action.

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.

I have never had a formal complaint filed against me in either the legal profession or nursing profession.

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, I have never had a tax lien or collection matter instituted against me.

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

No, 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.

- August 2008 – Lawrence County, Tennessee – Petition for Adoption and Termination of Parental Rights of one (1) minor child.
*Due to the confidential nature of this matter, the docket number and other identifying information will be provided upon request.
- May 2008 – Lawrence County, Tennessee – Petition for Readoption of two (2) minor children internationally adopted from Russia.
*Due to the confidential nature of this matter, the docket number and other identifying information will be provided upon request.
- December 2002 – Lawrence County, Tennessee – Complaint for Divorce. Final Decree of Divorce entered in February 2003. Docket Number 11214.

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.

CURRENT

- City of Columbia Industrial Development Board
Board member since 2020. Currently serving as Secretary.
- Henryville Historic Cemetery, Lawrence County, Tennessee
Board member since 2020. Currently serving as Secretary.

- Kiwanis of Columbia, Tennessee
Member since 2015.
- West 7th Street Church of Christ, Columbia, Tennessee
Member since 2004.

RETIRED WITHIN LAST FIVE (5) YEARS

- Maury County Chamber and Economic Alliance, Columbia, Tennessee
Board member 2017 – 2020
Public Relations Chair 2017 – 2019
Chamber Council Chair 2019 – 2020
- aMuse’um Children’s Museum, Columbia, Tennessee
Board member 2020 – 2022

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.

No. To my knowledge, I have never belonged to an organization, association, club, or society that limits membership based on 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.

- Maury County Bar Association
SCALES Reception November 30, 2021
Law Day Celebration 2017 and 2018

- Maury County Young Lawyers Division
Courthouse Cookout 2015 and 2016
- Tennessee Bar Association
Member since August 2012
CLE Course Presentation on Medical Records 2018

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.

- I participated in a published article for the American Bar Association, “The Great Resignation: The Law Firm Experience” published May 2022.
- Avvo 5-star Rating
- Super Lawyers Rising Star 2018, 2021 & 2022

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.

I have never been a candidate for public office, nor have I held any such office.

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

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

My educational and career paths are unconventional. Each has provided me with the privilege of serving individuals in their time of need, and has equipped me with a unique depth and breadth of knowledge that would be invaluable as a judge.

The comment is often made that being a nurse and being a lawyer must be drastically different; however, the two professions are remarkably similar. As a nurse, I cared for people as they faced daunting medical challenges. Likewise, as an attorney, I have the opportunity to represent individuals who find themselves in the unknown and frightening world of litigation. Each scenario may be different, but the opportunity to assist individuals in crisis is the same.

My history, both professional and personal, demonstrates a servant’s mentality and exceptional work ethic. For these reasons, it is my desire to join the judiciary and continue to serve my community.

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 seek appointment to the recently created fifth judicial seat in the 22nd Judicial District, which is comprised of Maury, Lawrence, Giles, and Wayne Counties. Although each county has recently grown in population, predominantly rural areas still exist; therefore, an understanding of the diversity of the population within the district is critical to affording its citizens access to justice. I had the honor of growing up on my family's farm in Summertown, in northern Lawrence County, where my family still resides. My upbringing instilled a love of this community and a true understanding of its citizens, which I believe would serve me well as a judge.

Currently, four judges hear civil and criminal cases in circuit court, and all chancery court matters. Should I be appointed, I would bring invaluable medical knowledge and understanding to the bench, as well as diverse experience in civil matters. Having had the privilege of practicing in front of the four sitting judges, I believe my temperament and character would complement our existing judiciary.

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, I would uphold the law even if I disagreed with the substance of a certain statute or rule. The integrity of our entire judicial system is built upon judges upholding the law in an impartial and consistent manner. Additionally, the citizens of the United States and, closer to home, the citizens of the 22nd Judicial District, are entitled to a fair ruling based on established law, rather than the personal ideals or opinions of the judge before which they stand.

As an attorney, there are rare moments I find my personal views in controversy with the law. One such time is, when representing prospective adoptive parents, I observe the multiple chances given to a birth parent before their parental rights are terminated. My frustration does not arise from the heartache and fear of my clients. I have been in their shoes before, and know it to be part of the uncertainty of being an adoptive parent. Conversely, my frustration stems from the extended turmoil and instability the child must endure during the process. Nevertheless, while my personal views are sometimes in controversy, I understand and respect the monumental weight of severing an individual's fundamental right to parent their child.

If every judge did what was right in their own eyes, the foundation of our judicial system would erode, and citizens would lose all trust and confidence in the legal process. Should I be appointed to serve the 22nd Judicial District, deciding matters in a fair and impartial manner would be my duty - a duty which I would assume with reverence and respect.

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. Julie Bowling, Attorney Tennessee Farmers Mutual Insurance Company [REDACTED] Columbia, Tennessee 38401 [REDACTED]
B. Judge Robert L. Jones (retired) [REDACTED] Columbia, Tennessee 38401 [REDACTED]
C. Judge Stella L. Hargrove (retired) [REDACTED] Columbia, Tennessee 38401 [REDACTED]
D. Sheila K. Butt, Maury County Mayor [REDACTED] Columbia, Tennessee 38401 [REDACTED]
E. Joey Hensley, Senator [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 Circuit Court of the 22nd 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 7, 2023.


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.

Julie Carrell Heffington
Type or Print Name


Signature

June 7, 2023
Date

032752
BPR #

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

Tennessee Department of Health – Registered

Nurse – License # 0000119742 – Inactive
