

Public Relations 101

Your Digital Profile, Managing the Media, Social Media

Barbara Peck

Supreme Court of Tennessee/

Administrative Office of the Courts

The Information Age

97% of Americans ages 30-49 use the internet daily

87% of Americans ages 50-64 use the internet daily



40% of American adults say they are on the internet “almost constantly”

The internet is how people learn about you.

What is the “media?”

Traditional – newspaper, radio, tv

Non-traditional – bloggers, online journalism

Social media

What everyone, and YOU post

It is all media.

What is media?

Traditional media -

1. Knoxville News Sentinel – 75,143
2. The Tennessean – 71,874
3. The Commercial Appeal – 68,890
4. Chattanooga Times Free Press – 53,130
5. Kingsport Times-News – 31,819
6. Johnson City Press – 23,327
7. Citizen Tribune – 18,693
8. The Daily Times – 17,924
9. Greeneville Sun – 11,900
10. Cleveland Daily Banner – 10,641

Not a single Tennessee media website is listed in the Top 100 nationally

TNCourts.gov

1,232,519 unique visitors in 2021

5,805,836 page hits

73,337 hits on general sessions webpage

40,701 on juvenile court webpage

The screenshot displays the TNCourts.gov website. At the top, a red navigation bar contains links for COURTS, PROGRAMS, ADMINISTRATION, FORMS & PUBLICATIONS, BOARDS & COMMISSIONS, and E-FILEING. Below this is a decorative header with a scroll effect. A sidebar on the left lists various court types: GENERAL SESSIONS COURTS, SUPREME COURT, COURT OF APPEALS, COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS, APPELLATE COURT CLERK'S OFFICE, and CIRCUIT CRIMINAL. The main content area features a section titled 'GENERAL SESSIONS COURTS' with a brief description of its jurisdiction. Below this are two news articles: 'Judiciary Mourns The Loss Of Retired Judge Barbara Haynes' (dated January 13, 2022) and 'Two Judges Receive Judges Making a Difference Award at TARCP Conference' (dated December 27, 2021). A search bar with the text 'SEARCH RULES' and a 'Search' button is located on the right side of the page.

TNCourts.gov

Why?

Extremely highly valued by Google

Always at the top of searches

of hits

#of updates

.gov

TNCourts.gov

What is on your profile?

LYNDA F. JONES

General Sessions Court Judge w/ Municipal Court Jurisdiction

Year Elected/Appointed

2014

Previous Employment

Judge Lynda Jones was in private practice for 22 years prior to her election. She is the founding member of The Jones Law Group, PLLC.

Education

University of Memphis School of Law, J.D. 1989
University of Tennessee at Knoxville, 1986, B.S. in Communications with Honors
Leadership Tennessee Council Graduate
Young Leaders Council Graduate
Donelson Hermitage Leadership, Class of 2011
President, Leadership Middle Tennessee 2017-2018

Membership(s)

Tennessee General Sessions Judges
National Association of Women Judges
Nashville Bar Association, General Sessions Court Committee Chair 2007
Nashville Bar Association, Diversity Committee 2017

Community Involvement

Member of West End United Methodist Church for 19 years
Member of West End United Methodist Finance Committee
Sunday School Instructor
Children's Choir Volunteer
Older Elementary Fellowship Volunteer
Girl Scout Troop Leader 2011 - Current
Belmont School of Law, Inns of Court 2017-2018



Contact Info

• 615-880-3672 (P)

Address

Justice A.A. Birch Building
408 2nd Avenue North, Suite 4110
Nashville, TN 37201

County

Davidson

Previous

Next

LILA STATOM

General Sessions Court Judge

Year Elected/Appointed

2012

Contact Info

• 423 200 7000 (P)

Address

203 Hamilton Co Courts Bldg
800 Market Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402

County

Hamilton

There will be a lot of election related hits on your profile page. Judge Carma McGee – 512 to 17,289

Update: webmaster@tncourts.gov

TNCourts.gov

News & Features

Awards,
appointments,
acknowledgements

Trends,
modernizations

General profiles

New Safe Baby Court Kicks Off in Henry County



[Learn More](#)

The court provides wraparound services to families with at least one child 3 or younger.



Recovery Court Lends Helping Hand To Flood Victims

[Learn More](#)

Community of Waverly Hard-Hit By Recent Floods

TNCourts.gov

[Judge Lynda Jones Recognized With Spirit of Leadership Award](#)
in the community. judge_lynda

[Judge Lynda Jones Elected President of the General Sessions Judges Conference](#)
judge_lynda_jones.jpg Display full image when

[Judge Statom Elected President Of General Sessions Conference](#)
include Judge Tommy Moore of Weakley County as treasurer; Judge Lynda Jones of Davidson County

[General Sessions Conference Lifetime Achievement Award Presented to Judge Dan Eisenstein](#)
Judge Lynda Jones, General Sessions Conference President, presents the award to Judge Daniel B.

[Fall 2021 General Sessions Judges Conference Held in Nashville](#)
sites about Covid-19." The Honorable Lynda Jones took the podium to recognize the judges who

[Judiciary Mourns Loss Of Justice Cornelia Clark](#)
will be missed by lawyers, judges, her friends in the Methodist faith, and her community." - Judge Lynda

[National Association of Women Judges Celebrates Anniversary of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment With Nashville Conference](#)
Dalton, Chair Amy Willoughby Bryant, Esq., Chair Friends Hon. Lynda F. Jones, Chair Brandi

[Municipal Court Judges Attend Spring Seminar](#)
discussing Codes at the TMJC seminar in Nashville, April 12th. (left to right) Judge Lynda Jones, Nashville,

[Tennessee Judges Take Lead in Using Technology to Weather Pandemic](#)
Sessions Presiding Judge Lynda Jones As presiding judge of the Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County

[Homeless Court Offers Second Chances, Resources to Vulnerable Population](#)
into Nashville, they reached out to Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County General Sessions Court Judge Lynda

[Davidson County General Sessions Expungement Clinic Brings Court to the Community](#)
Melissa Blackburn and Judge Lynda Jones, attended the event as well. In addition to the public

TNCourts.gov

Why do you want to complete profile, have stories on tncourts.gov?

Control the message

You see the article in advance and approve it

Google loves us

This is how we counter “bad press,” which is a fact of life sometimes

Disinformation

Disinformation campaigns are purposeful

Usually originate in Russia or China

Fake social media accounts, fake stories

Can target courts

Build mistrust, cause polarization, show American judicial system is corrupt, bias

Twin Falls, Idaho example

Counter with truth

Media coverage of cases

Part Two

Either someone “famous” did something, or the “something” a person did is unusual

First: Rule of Judicial Conduct

TN Code of Judicial Conduct

ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct

Code of Conduct for U.S Judges

All stand for the same basic principle:

A judge should not make public comment on the **merits of a matter pending or impending in any court**. A judge should require similar restraint by court personnel subject to the judge's direction and control. The prohibition on public comment on the merits does not extend to public statements made in the course of the judge's official duties, to explanations of court procedures, or to scholarly presentations made for purposes of legal education.

This applies to court staff too.

How do you speak about a case?

NEVER talk about the merits for attribution

NEVER speak off the record

Clarify in open court.

Speak through court orders.

Let the AOC speak for you.

Explain procedure, status,
not rulings

Examples

Judge Sandra Donaghy

Jury selection complete – ready to start – unexplained delay

Judge Creed McGinley

Holly Bobo trial

Judge Paula Skahan

Sedley Alley; Pervis Payne




Communicating With Reporters

Media advisory

Juvenile court
example – court
closed

Avoid surprises

Media advisories
are key


Supreme Court of Tennessee
Administrative Office of the Courts
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
www.tncourts.gov

DEBORAH TAYLOR YATE
Director


MEDIA ADVISORY
October 13, 2017

CONTACT: Barbara Peck
Office: 615-532-6047
Mobile: 614-440-2555
barbara.peck@tncourts.gov

MEDIA ADVISORY:
**GRUNDY COUNTY ARRAIGNMENT FOR AGGRAVATED RAPE
INVOLVING JUVENILE OFFENDERS, VICTIM**

A recent incident in Grundy County, Tennessee involving multiple juveniles and allegations of aggravated rape has received recent media attention. A court proceeding is scheduled for Monday, October 16, 2017. A court order has been issued in this case closing the arraignment (see attached). This means members of the general public and the media will not be permitted in the courtroom during the arraignment.

There will be space available outside of the courthouse for media and any public records will be available from the clerk's office after the hearing. The Grundy County Sheriff's Office will be providing security and direction for the arraignment.



TN Supreme Court Rule 30

Managing media in the courtroom

(1) *Coverage Generally.* Media coverage of public judicial proceedings in the courts of this State shall be allowed in accordance with the provisions of this rule. The coverage shall be subject, at all times, to the authority of the presiding judge to (i) control the conduct of the proceedings before the court; (ii) maintain decorum and prevent distractions; (iii) guarantee the safety of any party, witness, or juror; and (iv) ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice in the pending cause.

Courts are open in Tennessee.

TN Supreme Court Rule 30

Covers tv, radio, not print reporters

Request coverage two days in advance

Clerk notifies attorneys

Provides guidance on camera locations, lighting, microphones, etc.

What are we talking about?

Media management

- Media and public can come in, can report on what they see
- Can request records from clerk

Supreme Court Rule 30: Media Guidelines

- "*Coverage*" means any recording or broadcasting of a court proceeding by the media using **television, radio, photographic, or recording equipment.**

Supreme Court Rule 30 was last amended in 1999.

Who is the media?

Print, radio, tv

Freelancers

Bloggers

Social media
users



Anyone with a smart phone? First Amendment audit

Rule 30: "*Media*" means legitimate news gathering and reporting agencies and their representatives whose function is to inform the public, or persons engaged in the preparation of educational films or recordings.

Assume they are in your courtroom

TN Supreme Court Rule 30

To livestream or not to livestream...

- Rule 30 is silent.
- Biggest question: Is there something that cannot be shown? Jury, witness, juvenile?
- Cannot “take it back.”

Examples:

- Holly Bobo
- Curtis Watson
- Judge Sandra Donaghy

Virtual Proceedings

Supreme Court Orders strongly encourage judges to ensure media has access to courts during pandemic, including virtual hearings

Zoom

Really do not want the media in the Zoom meeting

Livestream to YouTube

- Appellate oral arguments
- School voucher case
- Sedley Alley & Pervis Payne
- Megan Boswell
- Chancellor Lyle examples

Need help connecting your Zoom to YouTube?

- Must set up in advance; use regularly
- Nick Morgan – Nick.Morgan@tncourts.gov

TN Supreme Court Rule 30

It is your courtroom.

Set the rules in advance, in writing.



No!



No!

TN Supreme Court Rule 30

Holly Bobo trial.

12 media outlets, two full weeks. More than 40 reporters.

One pool camera, one photographer, one row of reserved media in the courtroom.

Pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 30, the following media parameters are in place for the State v. Zach Adams. Please note Judge Creed McGinley sets media rules for this case and Hardin County Sheriff Sammy Davidson controls this building.

- 1) All media must formerly request permission to cover the trial. See Rule 30. During the trial, any requests or changes should be sent to: Barbara Peck, director of communications, Tennessee Administrative Office of the Court/Supreme Court of Tennessee, Barbara.peck@tncourts.gov/ 615-440-2555 (mobile).
- 2) The "media room" for this case is the Chancery Court room, located on the second floor of the Hardin County Courthouse. The pool camera - Channel 5 Nashville - will provide a livestream of the court proceedings to that room. There is wifi in this room. Laptops, tablets, phones, live shoots, etc. are permitted in this room.
- 3) The circuit courtroom where the trial will take place will likely be to capacity throughout the trial, with many turned away. One full row, approximately eight seats, has been reserved for media, at the discretion of the judge. Laptops are permitted for notetaking purposes only and in no way should be distracting. Smartphones, and cell phones ARE NOT PERMITTED in the gallery of the courtroom. This prohibition includes media. No photography or video is permitted in the courtroom. Once seated in the courtroom, you will not be permitted to move or leave until there is an official break in the court. If more than eight reporters would like to be in the courtroom, the media as a whole needs to work out an arrangement.
- 4) Only one pool camera is permitted in the courtroom. No other video or audio recording is allowed in the circuit courtroom. The pool camera is Channel 5 from Nashville. Please work directly with them to obtain the feed you need.
- 5) One still photographer will be permitted in the courtroom for the duration of the trial. The still photographer is with the Jackson Sun, part of the USA Today network. Please work directly with the Sun to obtain any photos you need. In addition, an Associated Press photographer will be permitted in the courtroom on September 11.
- 6) The jury cannot be photographed or captured on video at any time. Jurors cannot be identified during the trial.
- 7) The doors to the courthouse open at 8 a.m. each day. All media must go through the metal detectors. Please plan on exiting the building by 6:30 p.m. each night.
- 8) "Live" shots and "stand ups" are NOT permitted in the courthouse building when the court is in session, or in the 30 minutes before the start or after the end of court. Please note this is a small building and witnesses (including several who are incarcerated), the jury, security, and judicial administration will be moving and waiting throughout the entire building during the trial. Do not wander the halls looking for somewhere to do a "stand up." Please plan on doing these segments outside or in the chancery court room (media room).

Juvenile Court Rules

TN 37-1-153

Juvenile records and proceedings closed

Unless delinquency proceeding AND juvenile is 14+ at time of alleged act, first degree murder, second degree murder, rape, aggravated rape, rape of a child, aggravated rape of a child, aggravated robbery, esp aggravated robbery, kidnapping, aggravated kidnapping

If open, medical records, psychological evaluation confidential

- Ooltewah – bball trip rape;
- Grundy attempted locker room rape;
- Brentwood Academy locker room rape civil case

Juvenile Court Rules

Juv Rule of Procedure 114

Dependency and neglect always closed

Delinquency and unruly cases are open to the public

This conflicts with TN 37-1-153

Judge can close hearing if sought by a party, limited in scope, must make written findings to support an order to close

TSC Rule 30 (c)5

In juvenile court proceedings, if the court receives a request for media coverage, the court will notify the parties and their counsel of the request, and prior to the beginning of the proceedings, the court will advise the accused, the parties, and the witnesses of their personal right to object, and that if consent is given, it must be in writing. Objections by a witness will suspend media coverage as to that person only during the proceeding, whereas objections by the accused in a criminal case or any party to a civil action will prohibit media coverage of the entire proceeding.

Juvenile Court Rules

Yes, there is conflict

Different judges interpret differently

If closed, can acknowledge hearing or trial taking place?

Judge Anderson v. Judge Brock

Up to the judge

Anderson – yes, but no media allowed

Brock – no, will not confirm

Juvenile Court Rules

What does “closed” mean?

Closed to everyone, not just media

Court staff does not discuss after

Media is everyone and everywhere

If high-profile case, planning is key.

Media advisory with details

Require camera pooling

Pooling requires planning

Space to “pick up” feed

Court: proceeding logistics, space

Media: picks pool, all equipment, set-up

Questions & Scenarios

A reporter from the Tennessean comes into your court and begins taking notes on a case.

- Is this “coverage” as defined by Rule 30?
- Did she need to file a request 48-hours in advance?
- Does your answer change if she is using an iPhone to record the proceedings for note-taking purposes?

An “influencer” with 50,000 Twitter followers comes in to your courtroom and begins “live-tweeting” about a proceeding.

- Is this “coverage” as defined by Rule 30?
- Did she need to file a request 48-hours in advance?
- Does your answer change if she is using an iPhone to livestream video clips?

It is 2 p.m. and a high-profile arraignment was just scheduled for tomorrow morning.

- What is your game plan?

During court proceedings, people in the gallery are holding up their iPhones and pointing it at you and the witness stand.

- Options?

What if you want media coverage?

Outreach, preferably in writing

Set parameters in advance

Public/open space, record



Traditional Media

But, what else are you doing?

Types of stories:

Community involvement

Recovery courts

National Adoption Day; Tennessee Day

What are you passionate about?

Social Media

Do you need traditional media?

Should you be on social media?

Yes, if you take a strategic,
disciplined approach



Social Media

TN Advisory Opinion 12-01

Judges: Allowed with caution

Do NOT: Comprise impartiality, ex parte communications, comment on a current case

Can I be social media “friends” with lawyers, etc. who appear in my court?

Yes

Social Media

Context is key.

“The simple designation of a social media connection does not in itself indicate the degree or intensity of a judge’s relationship with a person.”

FL, MA, OK - no

Social Media for Judges

Define who you are in advance

What topics will you discuss, who will you follow/friend/endorse

When will you tweet/post?

Online is an extension of your offline work, except your actions are recorded and live in perpetuity. Never say online what you would not say to a room of people.

Social Media – The Good

Define who you are in advance

@JudgeDillardC

@5thCircAppeals

@JusticeWillett

@JusticeLeeTN



Justice Sharon Lee
@JusticeLeeTN Follows you

Mimi, Mom, Tennessee Supreme Court Justice 🗳️, 6th generation Monroe Countian, & UT Vols fan 🍊

📍 Tennessee

📅 Joined April 2014



Judge Don Willett ✓
@JusticeWillett

Extravagantly blessed husband & cofounder of 3 wee Willetts. Former rodeo bull rider. Fluent in legalese. 🇺🇸

⚖️

📍 Austin, Texas

🔗 fb.com/justicedonwill...

📅 Joined October 2009

🕒 Born on July 16

Social Media – The Good

Define who you are in advance



The image shows a Facebook profile for Judge Melissa Blackburn. The profile picture is a circular portrait of a woman with short brown hair, smiling. The cover photo features a blurred background of a gavel with the text "Judge Melissa BLACKBURN" overlaid in a mix of cursive and bold serif fonts. Below the profile picture are icons for a menu, message, and notification, along with a "Following" button. The name "Melissa Blackburn" is displayed in bold, followed by the handle "@JudgeBlackburn" and a "Follows you" badge. The bio reads: "Serving all Nashvillians in Davidson County General Sessions Court. Working each day for the mentally challenged as well as Nashville's Veterans. *Not Marsha". Location is "Nashville, Tennessee", website is "dvcvcourt.com/about.html", and joined date is "February 2013". At the bottom, it shows "1,364 Following" and "1,097 Followers".

Melissa Blackburn
@JudgeBlackburn Follows you

Serving all Nashvillians in Davidson County General Sessions Court. Working each day for the mentally challenged as well as Nashville's Veterans. *Not Marsha

Nashville, Tennessee dvcvcourt.com/about.html Joined February 2013

1,364 Following 1,097 Followers

Social Media – The Good

What topics will you discuss, who will you follow/friend/endorse

Politics/President?

Faith?

Kids – names & pics?

Social Media – The Ugly

Again, no discussion of current cases

West Virginia judge posts news story on Facebook of initial appearance of defendant accused in elder abuse, friends post comments

Courts have a Constitutional duty to be unbiased and impartial

Does your post throw into question your court's impartiality toward a specific type of defendant?

Judge Lammey; Coffee County DA; back the blue

Social Media – Getting started

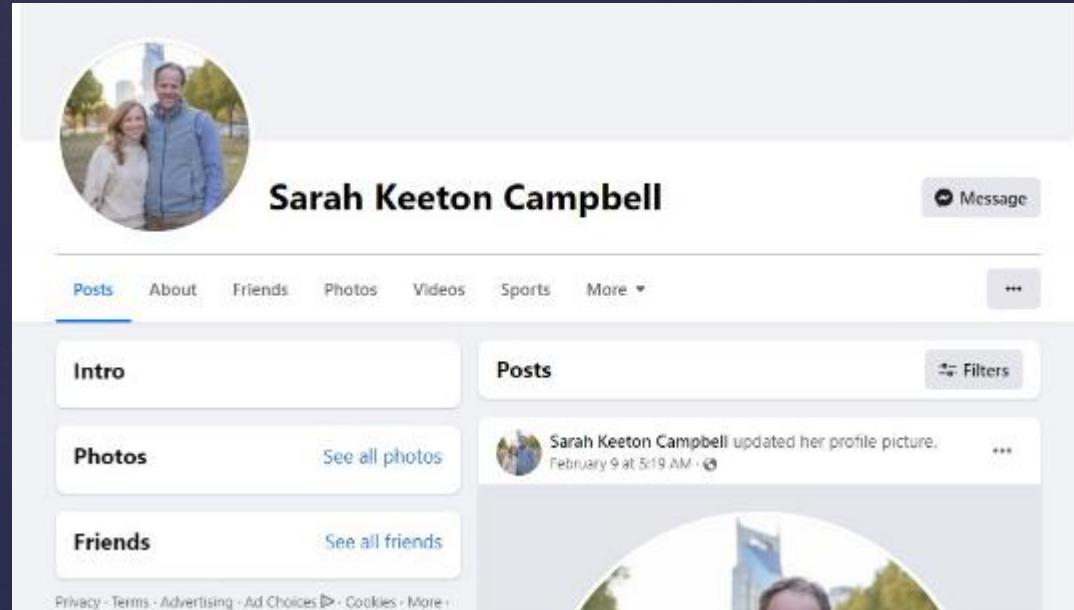
Facebook

Friends and family

Lock down your security settings

LinkedIn

Former colleagues, classmates



Social Media – Getting started

Define who you are

Set your parameters – topics, when tweeting

Follow some people, watch

Over half of Twitter accounts do not post