

**Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission**  
***Application for Nomination to Judicial Office***

Name: Elizabeth D. Rankin

Office Address: 108 Shenandoah St., Clarksville, Montgomery County, Tennessee 37043  
(including county)

---

Office Phone: 931-624-6801 Facsimile: None

Email Address:

Home Address: Montgomery County, Tennessee 37043  
(including county)

---

Home Phone: Cellular Phone:

---

**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 word processing format from the Administrative Office of the Courts (telephone 800.448.7970 or 615.741.2687; website [www.tncourts.gov](http://www.tncourts.gov)). The Commission requests that applicants obtain the word processing 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. Submit by the noon deadline date an original (unbound) completed application (with ink signature) to the Administrative Office of the Courts.** In addition, submit a digital copy with electronic or scanned signature via email to [debra.hayes@tncourts.gov](mailto:debra.hayes@tncourts.gov), or via another digital storage device such as flash drive or CD.

THIS APPLICATION IS OPEN TO PUBLIC INSPECTION AFTER YOU SUBMIT IT.

**PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE**

1. State your present employment.

**I am currently an attorney in private practice. I work from my home, Clarksville, TN 37043. Additionally, I teach Business Law courses online for Austin Peay State University, and develop those courses online.**

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

**I was licensed to practice law in Tennessee in 1995. My Board of Professional Responsibility number is 017528.**

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.

**I have been licensed to practice law in Tennessee since October, 1995. My BPR number is 017528. My license is currently active. I am not licensed in any other state.**

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).

**I have never been denied admission to, suspended or placed on inactive status by any Bar of any state.**

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).

1995-2005 I worked as a Trust Officer for **First Federal Savings Bank, Clarksville, TN**, after my graduation from law school. I had been employed there since 1975 and they wanted me to stay and operate the Trust Department for them. I remained there until 2005, when I decided to practice law full time and have been doing so ever since.

1995 to the present- I worked as an **Adjunct Instructor of Business Law at Austin Peay State University** on campus and online. I have developed all of the Business Law Courses online for

the University.

Leadership Clarksville Class of 1996

2005-2009 Law Office of Cunningham, Mitchell & Rocconi in Clarksville, TN 37040. I worked there practicing law full time until I took the bench as a General Sessions Judge in January, 2009.

January, 2009-September, 2010-I worked as a General Sessions Judge for Montgomery County, Tennessee. I was appointed by the Montgomery County Commission to fill the unexpired term of the late Judge Jack Hestle.

September, 2010-March 2018-I returned to worked as an attorney in private practice at the Law Office of Cunningham, Mitchell & Rocconi in Clarksville, TN 37040. During this period I was also certified as a Rule 31 Listed Family Law Mediator by the Supreme Court of Tennessee.

March, 2018 until the present-I am currently working as a private practice attorney on my own.

**Other:** My first job was a cashier for Dickson Sadler Drugs in Clarksville, TN. I worked there during High School in the late sixties and early seventies. It is no longer in business. I do not recall the exact dates. I also worked at the soda fountain at a store in Two Rivers Mall called McCrory's in the early seventies. I do not recall the exact dates. It is also no longer in business. I worked at First National Bank of Dayton, Ohio as a data processing clerk in 1971 until 1973, when I was married to my first husband, who was in the military stationed there. I moved back to Clarksville in 1973, after he got out of the Air Force and began working at First Federal Savings Bank, in 1975 and continued working there after I graduated from law school in 1995.

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.

**My current practice consists mostly of court appointed Juvenile dependency and neglect cases and Juvenile delinquency cases, approximately 85% and Family Law Mediation Cases, approximately 15%. I also have a post divorce case, which I brought from my former practice and I have a case involving a partition suit, also from my former practice.**

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.

**While working as a Trust Officer at First Federal Savings Bank, I gained a lot of experience managing trusts. I also attended the American Bankers Association Trust School at Northwestern University and received the designation of Certified Trust and Financial Advisor in July, 1995.**

**While serving as General Session Judge, I attended the following:**

- **National Judicial College-Reno, Nevada-October, 2009. I was awarded a Scholarship from the Administrative Office of the Courts to attend this College - (one of three Judges in the State of Tennessee selected for this scholarship)**
- **I attended the Tennessee Judicial Academy in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in August, 2009**
- **I attended the National Association of Drug Court Professionals Conference in Anaheim, California in June, 2009**

**While on the bench, I presided over thousands of General Sessions cases, to include criminal preliminary hearings, trials and settlements, and thousands of Juvenile cases, to include dependency and neglect cases brought mainly by the Department of Children's Services, juvenile delinquency matters and juvenile surrenders. I presided over Order of Protection Court, Drug Court and General Sessions civil court matters.**

**From 2000 until 2009, when I took the bench, I served as District 1 County Commission Representative for the Montgomery County Commission.**

**In 2011, I represented a Teacher client before an Administrative Law Judge for Tennessee on a matter involving a disciplinary action by the Montgomery County School Board. The State of Tennessee filed an action to suspend her license. The Administrative Law Judge determined that since she had already been disciplined by the local school board, that her license would not be suspended by the State. I do not recall the name of this case.**

**I practice mainly in Montgomery County. I have also handled cases in Robertson, Cheatham, Stewart and Houston Counties.**

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

**I have practiced extensively in General Sessions Court, doing trials, both civil and criminal, preliminary hearings, juvenile trials involving Termination of Parental Rights and Dependency and Neglect, Orders of Protection and various civil matters, including collection matters, landlord/tenant issues, orders of protection and detainer warrants. I have served extensively as Guardian Ad Litem in juvenile dependency and neglect cases as well as work as Guardian Ad Litem in Conservatorship cases. I have also had experience practicing and doing trial work in Chancery and Circuit Court, (mainly domestic relations matters, probate matters and several Partition suits, generally connected to probate cases) and several conservatorship cases in which I represented the Plaintiffs. I have handled several Plaintiff cases against insurance companies involving personal injury and property damage. In addition, I have had several appeals before the Tennessee Court of Appeals, involving juvenile matters, as well as the representation before the Administrative Law Judge described above. I have not had any jury trials in Circuit Court.**

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

**I think my work as a Rule 31 Listed Family Law Mediator gives me a unique perspective on family law matters. I have conducted approximately 35 to 40 Family Law mediations since receiving my listing in 2012. I have conducted these mediations in my law office as well as the offices of other attorneys. This particular area of the law requires listening to clients and their attorneys, applying the domestic relations laws to their particular situations and trying to help them reach agreements to try to prevent further litigation. I think this experience will serve me well as a Circuit Judge.**

**Also, my work for many years as a Business Law Adjunct Instructor for Austin Peay State University, would give me a background in understanding transactional and business matters that would come before a Circuit Judge.**

**As a private practice attorney I have had years of handling cases, listening to clients and determining the best way to move forward with their cases. I have developed great listening skills in my practice and in my mediations. This is a skill that is absolutely essential for a Judge.**

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

**In 2009, I submitted an application for General Sessions Judge for Montgomery County, TN and was appointed to that position. I have not submitted any other applications for any 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-Doctor of Jurisprudence 1995  
Faculty Scholarship recipient-3 years  
Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in graduating class  
American Jurisprudence Award for Wills and Trusts, and Legal Research and Writing  
Student Law Council representative-Jr. & Sr. year  
Bar Exam-July, 1995**

**Austin Peay State University  
BBA-Bachelor of Business Administration, 1978, Cum Laude  
MBA-Masters of Business Administration, 1983**

**American Bankers Association Trust School at Northwestern University, July 1995-  
designation of Certified Trust and Financial Advisor.**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

12. State your date of birth.

**My date of birth is 1951**

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

**I have lived in Clarksville, Tennessee all of my life, with the exception of 3 years from 1969 to 1972, when I lived in Dayton, Ohio, when I was married to my first husband.**

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

**I have lived in Montgomery County, Tennessee all of my life, with the exception of 3 years from 1969 to 1972, when I lived in Dayton, Ohio, when I was married to my first husband.**

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

**I am registered to vote in Montgomery 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.

**I have had no military service.**

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 or been convicted or had any diversion for any violation of any law, regulation or ordinances. I have had one traffic ticket for speeding in approximately 2002, but I do not remember the exact date.**

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.

**To my knowledge, I am not under any federal, state or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute or disciplinary rule.**

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.

**I have had two complaints filed against me. In approximately 2012 or 2013, a complaint was filed against me with the Board of Professional Responsibility. The complainant was the opposing party to a client I represented in a custody and visitation matter. The substance of the complaint was that order submitted in the case, which was prepared by me and agreed to by my opposing counsel was not what the court ordered. I received a letter from the Board of Professional Responsibility, to which I promptly responded. I was notified by the Board of Professional Responsibility that this was not a matter in which the board would be involved. I do not recall the name of the case nor do I recall the name of the person who filed it.**

**The second complaint was filed against me with the Court of the Judiciary in 2010, when I was on the bench. The complaint was filed by my opponent in the 2010 election, Ken Goble, and his former law partner, Roger Nell. It alleged that I had not disclosed all of my election expenditures, which was not true and it made a vague complaint about judicial conduct, regarding campaign signs. I do not recall the details about this allegation. It was filed just before the election. I did not win the election. The judicial board took no action against me.**

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.

**I have never had a tax lien or any other collection procedure filed against me by any federal, state, local authority or creditor.**

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

**I have never filed for bankruptcy, either personally or as part of any partnership, LLC, corporation, or other business organization.**

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.

**Joe Gullett, Jr. v. Elizabeth D Gullett, Montgomery County, Chancery Court. I do not know the docket number. This was in 1974 or 1975. This divorce was based on irreconcilable differences.**

**Elizabeth D. Rankin v. Oscar L. Rankin, Jr., Montgomery County Chancery Court. I do not know the docket number. This was in 1993. It was based on inappropriate marital conduct. It was appealed by Oscar L. Rankin, Jr., and was upheld on appeal.**

**I was a party in a legal proceeding against the Clarksville Beer Board of which I was a member, and only in my representative capacity in approximately 2008 or 2009. It had to do with the suspension of a convenience store license to sell liquor for allegedly selling to minors. I do not remember the name of the party filing the suit and I do not have the docket number.**

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.

**I was a member of The Arts and Heritage Development Council for Clarksville, Montgomery County from 2011-2017. I served as secretary of this organization in 2017.**

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.

**I do not have any memberships in any societies or organizations described above.**

### **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.

**American Bar Association 1995-2012**

**Tennessee Bar Association 1995-2017**

**Montgomery County Bar Association 1995-2016**

**Tennessee Association of General Sessions Judges, February, 2009–September 2010**

**National and Tennessee Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2009-2010**

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 was awarded two American Jurisprudence Awards upon graduation from law school, for Wills and Trusts and Legal Research and Writing.**

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.

**District 1 County Commissioner, appointed 2001 and elected in 2004 and 2008.**

**General Sessions Judge-Montgomery County, Tennessee-appointed January, 2009**

### **ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

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

**After being on the General Sessions bench for approximately 1 ½ years, I felt my experience there would lend itself well to the Circuit Bench. I would like to have the opportunity to apply this experience in Circuit Court. I enjoyed serving my community as a County Commissioner representative for nine years and as a Judge and would like to have the opportunity to continue that service, if I am chosen to fill this Judicial Vacancy. I can work well with the other Judges as I have the experience and temperament needed for a demanding job such as this. I think I could serve the community well as a Circuit Judge for the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.**

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 for the trial court vacancy for Circuit Judge of Montgomery and Robertson Counties in the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit. This is a newly created position. There are currently four Circuit Judges and one Chancellor for this Judicial Circuit as well as four General Sessions Judges and one Referee. The cases which are heard are varied. I think I would do well with Juvenile and domestic matters, probates and cases involving contracts and other business matters. I think my current and former experience as a private practice attorney and as a Judge and a Family Law Mediator would well qualify me for an appointment to the Circuit Bench. Of the five Judges which this Circuit currently has and the four General Sessions Judges and Referee, only one Judge is a woman and one Referee is a woman. I think that some more diversity would be a great think to have in this Circuit.**

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 would uphold the law even if I disagreed personally with the substance of the law. There have been many times, as a private attorney, especially in my early days in private practice, that I have represented clients who were charged with criminal offenses. Even though I did not agree with what they had done, and I knew that some of them were guilty, because they told me, I still felt that they deserved the best criminal representation that I could provide to them. I always provided that representation to them to the best of my ability. And I always maintained attorney/client privilege in all cases.**

#### 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. Rep. Curtis Johnson, Nashville, TN 37243,**

**B. Rep. Joe Pitts, Nashville, TN 37243, 615-**

**C. County Commissioner Robert W. Gibbs, District 5, Montgomery County, Commission,  
Clarksville, TN 37040, † or**

**D. Mr. Jeff Burkhart, City of Clarksville, Council Representative, Ward 12,  
St., Clarksville, TN 37040,**

**E. Ms. Sally Castleman, Chief, Master Planning Division, Department of the Army, Fort Campbell, Ky. and neighbor, 110 Shenandoah St. Clarksville, TN 37043, 931-624-8234**

**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, 19<sup>th</sup> 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: \_\_\_\_\_

*July 20, 2018.*

*Elizabeth D. Rankin*  
Signature

When completed, return this questionnaire to Debbie Hayes, 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.

Elizabeth D. Rankin

  
Signature

July 20, 2018

Date

BPR # 017528

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