

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

1/17/23

Name: Erin Danielle "Dani" Westerman Bryson

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(including county)

[REDACTED]

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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](http://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 for the 23rd Judicial District, primarily assigned to Dickson County Circuit Court

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

2012, BPR #031049

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 #031049, active since November 2012

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).

I was employed as a Criminal Investigator for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District from August 2012 until November 2012 when I was sworn in as an Assistant District Attorney. I was an independent contractor with Beautycounter from November 2020 until April 2024.

During Law School, I was the Head Representative for Barbri at the University of Tennessee and served as a Teaching Assistant for a Legal Writing Course.

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 practice criminal law, 95% of which is in circuit court. The other 5% is filling in as needed in juvenile or general sessions. This includes every type of criminal case possible from shoplifting and driving on a revoked license to 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder.

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.

For the first six months of practice, I handled cases for the 23rd Judicial District Drug Task Force in Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart counties in circuit court. This included the full range of misdemeanor and felony drug offenses and related charges. For the next three years, I moved to the domestic violence grant position. I handled all domestic related offenses in Cheatham, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart counties in both general sessions and circuit courts. I maintained records and applied for the renewal of the grant and worked with local organizations to connect victims to services. From May 2016 until July 2018, I handled general sessions, juvenile, and circuit courts in Stewart County. This case load included every type of case imaginable including homicide, multicounty animal cruelty, driving under the influence, and sex offenses. Next, I came back to Dickson and Humphreys counties to handle general sessions and circuit court cases originating from the Drug Task Force. During this time I had limited interaction with the Department of Safety, including attending at least one hearing. After two and a half years, I transitioned to Dickson County Circuit handling all misdemeanor and felony cases as part of a 3 to 4 person team.

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

Domestic violence cases are extremely hard. There's a reason it is referred to as cyclical: it is hard to break. I remember a defendant bringing me the certificate of completion for his batterer's intervention classes and thanking me through tears for making him complete it.

I have been part of several notable prosecution teams:

- State v. Lamisha Haynes – convicted of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder after multi-day trial. Involved claims of self-defense and voluntary intoxication.
- State v. Mendy Neal – “cold case” of arson and murder pled after 3 days of trial
- State v. Zackary Earl Ponder – convicted as charged of 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder after multi-day

jury trial.

I handled the following significant jury trials independently:

- State v. Barry Zbleski – 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder resulting from overdose
- State v. Lloyd Allard – multi-day trial for Aggravated Rape of a Child and Child pornography. Defendant raised insanity defense and both sides called expert witnesses. Defendant sentenced to 144 years.
- State v. Terry Leon Lancaster – Sexual Offenses against a child – serving 40 years

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.

University of Tennessee, College of Law; 2009-2012; Juris Doctorate with Honors, Concentration in Advocacy; Tennessee Law Review- Articles Editor; Moot Court Board, Ray H. Jenkins Intramural Mock Trial Co-Champion; Order of the Barristers. Internships with 6th and 23rd Judicial District Attorney Generals and Tennessee Attorney Generals Office.

Middle Tennessee State University; 2005-2009; Bachelors of Science with honors, Political Science; Honors College Graduate with thesis on victim's rights under Dr. John R. Vile; Intern to Governor Phil Bredesen, Constituent Services Office.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

12. State your date of birth.


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

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

Since birth, excluding college (2005-2009) and law school (2009-2012)
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15. State the county in which you are registered to vote.

Dickson
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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.
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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.
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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.
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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 received a public censure in 2020 from the Board of Professional Responsibility for conduct arising in 2017. I handled a preliminary hearing where an officer told me one thing at the table and testified during cross examination in a contradictory manner. I did not redirect, but after the hearing tried to establish proof he lied. I did not feel that I could prove it and did not alert the court of the contradictory testimony. Faced with the same situation today, I would have redirected the officer and asked about the contradiction instead of trying to sort it all out after the hearing.

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.

First Baptist Church, Dickson, Tennessee

Carenet Pregnancy Medical Center, Dickson, Tennessee: Vice President of Board of Directors, former President, former Treasurer

Tennessee Baptist Mission Board: Board of Directors; Sexual Abuse Task Force; Chair of Committee on Resolutions

Southern Baptist Convention: Executive Committee, Committee on Resolutions, Ad Hoc Committee for Legal Strategies

Pomona Baptist Church: Chairman of Finance Committee, Sunday School teacher

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.

a. If so, list such organizations and describe the basis of the membership limitation.

b. 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

### 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.

Not applicable.

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.

Prosecutor of the Year for 23<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District 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.

Not applicable.

**ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

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

I am thrilled our district is getting an additional judge. I have spent the last several years discussing with lawyers and court staff in the district what is needed. I ultimately realized that all the needs I saw were ones I could fill and should be willing to do so. I've never practiced civil law, but I have spent my entire career shifting around and constantly learning new facets of the law. I know I can serve the 23rd with courage, commitment, and compassion.

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)*

Our five-county rural district requires judges to have an ever-changing schedule. I'm willing to travel the district and handle all types of cases. The largest need I have seen, especially through handling domestic violence and drug cases is addressing mental health needs that cause recidivism outside of the traditional probation and incarceration. The existing judges each handle one "specialty" within the district: Bonding, Post Conviction Relief, and Drug Court. The new fourth judge needs to seek out a mental health court for the district.

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 wholeheartedly believe and affirm that the life of an unborn child begins at the moment of conception. Current law establishes that a fetus of any stage of gestation is a victim, except for acts or omissions by the mother. This means that when an infant is born drug exposed, the mother shall not be prosecuted. There was a short period where prosecution was allowed but the statute was allowed to expire. I believe the child in the womb is a victim of criminal harm. I respect the legislature's reasoning for choosing not to prosecute in this circumstance and have followed the law.

**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. General W. Ray Crouch, Jr., District Attorney General for the 23 <sup>rd</sup> , PO Box 580, Charlotte, TN 37036. [REDACTED]
B. The Honorable David D. Wolfe, 23 <sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Circuit Court, Division I, [REDACTED]
C. The Honorable Andy Brigham, General Sessions Judge for Stewart County. [REDACTED]
D. Brian Beasley, Director of the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Judicial Drug Task Force, [REDACTED]
E. Ryan Wicker, Pastor of Education, [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 [Court] 23rd Judicial District Circuit Court 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 8, 2024.

*Erin D. Bryson*

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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.

Erin D. Bryson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Type or Print Name

*Erin D. Bryson*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

06/08/2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

031049

\_\_\_\_\_  
BPR #

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

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