

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

1/31/19

Name: J. Brent Bradberry

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(including county) 121 E. Main St.  
Dresden, Weakley County, Tennessee, 38225

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Home Address: [REDACTED]  
(including county) McKenzie, Carroll County, Tennessee, 38201

Home Phone: Not applicable Cellular Phone: [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 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 [ceesha.lofton@tncourts.gov](mailto:ceesha.lofton@tncourts.gov), or via another digital storage device such as a flash drive.

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

**PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE**

1. State your present employment.

Assistant District Public Defender, 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of Tennessee

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

2012 / BPR #31038

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.

TN / BPR #31038 / Licensed October 2012 / 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).

STATE OF TENNESSEE, 27<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT PUBLIC DEFENDER, Dresden, TN  
Assistant District Public Defender, January 2017 – Present

Criminal Defense of indigent Tennessee citizens.

General Sessions Court – Approximately 460 cases per year

Circuit Court – Approximately 90 felony cases and 100 probation violations per year

STATE OF TENNESSEE, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS, Union City, TN  
Staff Attorney for Senior Judge, November 2015 – December 2016

- Advanced legal research and legal writing:

- Drafted Worker's Compensation Supreme Court Opinions and Court of Appeals Opinions
- Drafted dozens of judicial trial court orders
- Assisted the Senior Judge in preparation of cases in the areas of Family Law, Healthcare Liability, Personal Injury, Professional Negligence, Products Liability, Criminal Law, Capital Sentencing, Workers' Compensation, Professional Negligence, Election Contests, and Board of Professional Responsibility censures and others.
- Witnessed dozens of cases argued before the Tennessee Courts of Appeal and met with the various panels during their discussions about each of the cases both before and after oral argument.

JAMES H. BRADBERRY & ASSOCIATES, Dresden, TN  
Private Attorney, October 2012 – November 2015

- A typical rural West Tennessee law firm representing clients in court and before government agencies in the legal areas described in Question 7 below
- Opened a satellite office of the firm in McKenzie in 2014
- Licensed to practice law in the Federal Courts of Tennessee
- Member, Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (TACDL)
- Graduate, TACDL Trial College, 2014

JAMES H. BRADBERRY & ASSOCIATES, Dresden, TN  
Law Clerk, August 2011 – September 2012

PRIOR CAREER, 1991 - 2011

I worked in various roles in the home furnishings industry for twenty years; from ownership of a manufacturing company to supply chain, sales and sales management. I will be happy to discuss those roles upon request.

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.

As an Assistant Public Defender, 100% of my practice is Criminal Defense.

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.

My trial court practice is extensive. Since January 2017, I am active in every session of the Weakley County Circuit Court representing nearly 200 felony defendants per year (both new indictments and probation violations). During my early career, I practiced primarily in criminal, family, real estate and estate law in trial level courts. In criminal law, those duties included conducting preliminary hearings, motion hearings, and criminal jury trials with the associated filings. In family law I prosecuted and defended divorces, post-divorce custody matters, adoptions, and conservatorships. In real estate law, I drafted deeds, mortgages, and land contracts, closed loans, and litigated boundary disputes. In estate law, I drafted wills and powers of attorney, and administrated estates. Additionally, I helped clients obtain Social Security benefits, retain seized property, defend eviction proceedings, form business entities and draft contracts.

I did not argue before any of the appellate courts but drafted both civil and criminal motions and briefs to those courts.

I represented one municipality during my private practice, but otherwise have no experience in legislative or regulatory bodies.

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

#### The Unknown Client

As I entered McDonald's, I recognized an employee behind the counter but could not remember her name. Was she an old divorce client? A criminal client? Maybe someone I worked with in a previous occupation? She wore the nametag of some type of manager or manager trainee, smiled and took my order just like any other attendant would. No special communication, just service with a smile. I received my order and took a seat. I had the table to myself and began to enjoy my meal when, over my left shoulder I heard, "Do you remember me?"

I smiled, but before I could answer, she said, "I'm 237 days clean and sober! Today is my last day here because I have a new job as a receptionist at an insurance firm. I am so excited, and I have you to thank for it!"

"That's great," I responded as I began to recall more about this young woman. "Are you still in Drug Court?"

"Yes, I am and I'm doing great! I lead some of the meetings and mentor several of the other participants. Things are really going well!"

...

I have seen the remarkable differences Drug Court makes in people's lives. I am blessed to experience what our Drug/Recovery Courts can provide. The 27<sup>th</sup> District has a Recovery Court. The 24<sup>th</sup> District does not. Nearly all of my current clientele have children, most are divorced,

and a high percentage have substance abuse problems. Many rural communities are limited by lack of funding or services from helping these people before they become submerged in the criminal justice system. I hope to explore programs in this district and in this court to keep families together, help people manage their addictions, and deter the mothers and fathers of West Tennessee from becoming clients of the Public Defender.

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

Though stated above generally, I want to elaborate on my time as a Staff Attorney for a Senior Judge.

Tennessee currently has 3 Senior Judges. They are retired trial level judges hired by the Supreme Court to handle cases across the state when the local judge has a conflict and no judge in an adjoining district can sit by interchange. When this situation arises, the Administrative Office of the Courts assigns the case to a Senior Judge who hears the case to final disposition when feasible.

The cases assigned to a Senior Judge are usually difficult and complex. Cases that last for years, sometimes decades; Cases where the District Attorney may be the plaintiff or the Sheriff may be the defendant; Cases where an attorney wants his license restored after it has been revoked for years; cases, in other words, that no one wants to hear.

I coordinated with attorneys from around the country and prepared these cases for trial with the direction of an experienced trial judge. I would describe the position as on-the-job training for a judge; From conducting scheduling conferences and drafting scheduling orders, reading, analyzing and drafting orders on complex and numerous motions (sometimes dozens within one case), to literally sitting at the bench next to the judge through motion hearings and trials. I listened, I watched, and I learned. The experience was priceless.

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.

NASHVILLE SCHOOL OF LAW, Nashville, TN  
Doctor of Jurisprudence, December 2011

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN, Martin, TN  
Master of Business Administration, December 2007

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN, Martin, TN  
Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, August 1993

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, West Point, NY  
Fall 1989 – Spring 1991, No degree, discharged under Honorable conditions

CENTRAL TEXAS COLLEGE, Killeen, TX  
Fall 1987, No degree, attended while stationed at Ft. Hood, TX

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS, Memphis, TN  
Fall 1986, No degree, joined the United States Army

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

12. State your date of birth.

1967

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

50 years

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

39 years

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

Carroll

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.

Tennessee Army National Guard, 1985-1987; Discharged to Active Duty

United States Army, 1987-1991; Discharged under Honorable conditions as an E-4/Cadet  
Decorations: Good Conduct Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Service Ribbon, National  
Defense Service Medal

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

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

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.

Not applicable

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.

Chancery Court of Carroll County, Tennessee, No. 96DR59, Final Order filed June 25, 1996 in an uncontested divorce.

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.

Chairman, Carroll County Republican Party, June 2016 - present  
Interim Chairman & Secretary, The McKenzie Public Library Enrichment Foundation, February 2018 - present  
Elder, First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, McKenzie, Tennessee  
Assistant Coach, McKenzie Shooting Sports Pistol and Rifle Teams, 2018  
Assistant Coach, McKenzie Youth Baseball, Basketball and Football, 2014 - 2018  
Commissioner, Carroll County Election Commission, 2014-2015  
National Rifle Association

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.

Not applicable

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)*

Two generations before me have been judges. My cousin has been a Juvenile Judge since 1980. My great-uncle was Chancellor of the 27<sup>th</sup> District.

When this vacancy occurred, two industry leaders approached me. They knew me from private practice. Both expressed confidence in me to preside humbly and professionally and hold the position at election. With such a vote of confidence from within the district, I became inspired to run. Further, I hope to initiate, or help with, the formation of a recovery court. I believe such a program would help our citizens on an individual basis, and would affect the families whose dysfunction has caused them to access the Chancery Court.

Becoming Chancellor of the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District will be the third most important accomplishment in my life, trailing only husband and father. Truly this is an opportunity of a lifetime and I will be forever grateful for appointment

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 the Chancellorship for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District encompassing Benton, Carroll, Decatur, Hardin and Henry Counties. This district stretches over 100 miles along the Tennessee River in West Tennessee. Currently, one Chancellor presides over the entire district. The 2019 fiscal year filings and dispositions are attached to this application with top filings of probate, divorce, and parenting/child support.

I know that careful time management and case management will be critical, especially in the

early months. Fortunately, we have five strong Clerk and Masters prepared to help train the new Chancellor. My prior business experience will play a vital role in this transition. I helped manage multiple manufacturing facilities and directed a national sales force. That experience will be applied to maintain and improve the system put in place by our previous Chancellor. I have the skills to manage this district and I look forward to that opportunity.

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. Early in my career, a mother of three retained me to handle a child custody modification. I was at least her third lawyer, but too naïve to realize the implication. Nevertheless, she had a good chance to become primary residential parent. Her oldest could now tell the judge she wanted to live with her mother. Dad had moved a girlfriend into his three bedroom apartment, housing six. Plus, I obtained damaging information from a credible witness who didn't want to take the stand unless the dad lied.

We went to trial. My witnesses testified perfectly. Mom held up well and daughter begged the judge to live with her mother. I couldn't wait for opposing counsel to put the dad on the stand. I knew when he took the stand, he would collapse when I asked him about what I knew. This dad was arrogant and boisterous. I knew he wanted to take the stand.

"You rest?" opposing counsel asked. "Your Honor, the defendant also rests," he said.

I knew it was over. Opposing counsel knew I had the proof to win even if his client didn't. I believe the Chancellor knew I had the proof. But I did not prove a material change in circumstances. I knew the dad would testify. But he didn't.

The Chancellor denied my request to re-open the proof and ruled against my client. A difficult decision for me to accept, but an example I will follow.

### 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. Walter Butler, Bethel University President, McKenzie, TN 38201, [REDACTED]

B. Curtis Halford, Tennessee House of Representatives District 79, [REDACTED]

C. Col. James Harding, US Army, Retired, Huntingdon, TN 38344, [REDACTED]

D. Jill Holland, Mayor, McKenzie, TN 38201, [REDACTED]

E. Paul G. Summers, Tennessee Attorney General, Retired, [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 Chancery Court of the Twenty-Fourth 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: May 24, 2019.

  
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Signature

When completed, return this questionnaire to Ceesha Lofton, 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.

J. Brent Bradberry  
Type or Print Name

  
Signature

May 24, 2019  
Date

031038  
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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## DISTRICT 24 CHANCERY FILINGS AND DISPOSITIONS

FILINGS BY TYPE						
	Benton	Carroll	Decatur	Hardin	Henry	TOTAL
Adoption/Surrender	10	12	5	20	16	63
Appeal from Administrative Hearing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conservatorship/Guardianship	5	19	3	8	3	38
Contract/Debt/Specific Performance	5	4	2	4	6	21
Damages/Torts	0	0	0	0	0	0
Divorce with Minor Children	33	43	14	4	48	142
Divorce without Minor Children	45	37	19	5	81	187
General Sessions/Juvenile Appeal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interstate Support	0	0	0	0	0	0
Judicial Hospitalization	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legitimation/Paternity	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Malpractice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous General Civil	10	30	4	7	31	82
Orders of Protection	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other Domestic Relations	0	0	0	1	3	4
Probate/Trust	80	78	40	60	122	380
Real Estate Matter	5	4	3	10	3	25
Residential Parenting/Child Support	57	65	25	9	57	213
Workers Compensation	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>1,156</b>

DISPOSITIONS BY TYPE						
	Benton	Carroll	Decatur	Hardin	Henry	TOTAL
Adoption/Surrender	9	11	4	17	16	57
Appeal from Administrative Hearing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conservatorship/Guardianship	4	18	18	4	24	68
Contract/Debt/Specific Performance	4	7	4	9	14	38
Damages/Torts	1	0	0	0	0	1
Divorce with Minor Children	34	62	16	9	64	185
Divorce without Minor Children	50	39	19	1	83	192
General Sessions/Juvenile Appeal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interstate Support	0	0	0	0	0	0
Judicial Hospitalization	1	0	0	0	0	1
Legitimation/Paternity	0	0	0	1	0	1
Medical Malpractice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous General Civil	13	28	3	10	27	81
Orders of Protection	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other Domestic Relations	1	1	0	0	3	5
Probate/Trust	103	69	30	85	121	408
Real Estate Matter	3	7	11	14	4	39
Residential Parenting/Child Support	64	73	37	3	99	276
Workers Compensation	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>1,353</b>

DISPOSITIONS BY MANNER						
	Benton	Carroll	Decatur	Hardin	Henry	TOTAL
Compromise/Settlement-No Hearing	1	0	13	10	0	24
Court Approved Settlement	158	7	24	6	277	472
Dismissal	48	0	20	22	15	105
Other	0	0	16	1	0	17
Transferred	1	3	0	0	1	5
Trial-Jury	0	0	2	2	1	5
Trial-Non-Jury	76	305	34	112	160	687
Uncontested/Default	3	0	33	1	0	37
Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>1,353</b>