

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

1/31/19

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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.

TN Assistant District Attorney General for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

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

2000, BPR No. 20711

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, 20711, Licensed in 2000 (Active); FL, 492671, Licensed in 2001 (Inactive)

I allowed my Florida license to become inactive after relocating back to Tennessee from Florida inasmuch as I was no longer practicing in Florida.

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 a Bar. Between July 21, 2008 and April 16, 2014, there was an administrative suspension of my TN license due to non-payment of annual bar fees. During this time period, my office was in Florida and I was not practicing law in the State of Tennessee. Moreover, at the time, I did not anticipate returning to Tennessee to practice law and did not deem it necessary to continue paying annual bar fees in Tennessee in order to maintain an active license in Tennessee. Upon returning back to Tennessee to work, I satisfied payment of my bar fees and reinstated my license to active status.

On August 15, 2014, my Florida license was placed on inactive status due to me relocating back to Tennessee and no longer practicing law in Florida.

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).

Upon graduating from the University of Memphis School of Law in 2000, I joined the Memphis

law firm of Tate Lazarini, which specialized in securities litigation and arbitration defense on a national scale. The firm's clients consisted of Morgan Keegan, Raymond James, Wachovia, UBS, Bank of America, Duncan Williams, Carty & Company as well as other national and regional brokerage firms. I served as an Associate Attorney, primarily assisting Senior Partner Shepherd Tate as second chair. In January 2005, I made partner, becoming a member attorney of Tate Lazarini. I continued working in the Memphis office until early 2007 when I transferred to the firm's Tampa, Florida office where I ended up serving as the managing partner. In October 2007, Tate Lazarini merged with Bass Berry & Sims, and a decision was made to close the Tampa office. Upon such occurrence and a desire to remain in Florida, I left the firm.

Thereafter, at the end of 2007, due to my strong passion for children and a desire to move from the private sector into the public sector to utilize my legal training and experience for the positive benefit of children, I became a Senior Attorney with the Florida Department of Children & Families. In such position, I prosecuted child abuse cases, represented the State in dependency and neglect proceedings and pursuing the termination of parental rights and participated in child protective meetings to provide risk and legal assessments as well as meetings with Guardian Ad Litem, case workers and counsel for parents regarding visitation and parental goals. I remained with the Florida Department of Children & Families until mid 2008 when I elected to leave in order to have greater time to devote to the opening of a local private school. Additionally, inasmuch as the Department of Children & Families played a role in the licensing of the school facility, I felt that it would be best to resign my position to avoid any appearance of conflict.

In 2008, my husband Bruce Griffey and I jointly opened the Foreign Language Immersion Early Childhood Center & Preparatory Academy in Celebration, Florida. Prior to moving from Memphis to Florida, our children attended the Foreign Language Immersion Childcare Center in Memphis, and, upon relocation, we were unsuccessful at finding a similar center for our children to continue their language development. Additionally, we were not satisfied with the education our children were receiving at the local community school. As a result, my husband and I determined to open a private school option, offering language immersion opportunities and adopting Asian and Finnic teaching methodologies to provide a world class educational foundation to preschool and elementary school students. We single-handedly took the school from a start-up idea to a thriving seven figure business operation. I served as not only owner, but also Managing Attorney, and, in such capacity, I resolved all employment matters, including, but not limited to, worker's compensation and unemployment claims, development and oversight of implementation of policies and procedures for compliance with employment laws and state licensing laws, negotiation and drafting of contracts with vendors, representation of the company in state regulatory audits and collection of accounts receivable. In November 2013, my family and I relocated back to Tennessee (specifically Paris, TN) due to family illness. I commuted back and forth to Florida through late Spring/early Summer 2014 to continue managing the school. At such time, in order to remain in Tennessee full-time with my family, ownership of the school was transferred to a set of parents to continue expansion of my original vision for the school.

During a portion of the time period that I served as Owner and Managing Attorney for the Foreign Language Immersion Early Childhood Center and Preparatory Academy, I also opened and maintained my own law practice, specifically from mid 2008 through 2011. Having spent

the first 7 years of my career on the civil defense side, my private practice focused on representing plaintiffs in commercial and investment-related litigation in state and federal courts as well as in arbitration. Due to the successful growth of the law practice, my husband joined me in 2010 to become Davis & Griffey; however, by 2011, due to the continued expansion and increasing demands of managing the school, my husband and I closed the law practice in order to devote full-time attention to the school.

In May 2014, after having transferred ownership of the school, I joined the law firm of Hardee, Martin, Donahoe & Owens in Jackson, Tennessee, where I remained until an offer was extended in October 2014 to join the District Attorney General's Office for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. From October 2014 through March 2018, I served as an Assistant District Attorney in the Child Support Division and was responsible for covering child support matters in both Chancery Court as well as Juvenile Court in Decatur, Hardin and Henry Counties. My duties and responsibilities included establishing, modifying and terminating child support orders as well as legally pursuing individuals for non-payment of child support obligations. On April 1, 2018, I was transferred to the Criminal Division of the District Attorney's Office to prosecute vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, DUI related and HMVO cases in General Sessions and Circuit Court in Benton, Carroll, Decatur and Henry Counties. I remain in said position today.

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.

Presently, my law practice is exclusively criminal as a prosecutor and has been since being transferred from the Child Support Division to the Criminal Division of the District Attorney General's Office on April 1, 2018. However, the bulk of my nearly 19 year legal career has been in the civil arena both as counsel for plaintiffs as well as defense counsel.

7. Describe generally your experience (over your entire time as a licensed attorney) in trial courts, appellate courts, administrative bodies, legislative or regulatory bodies, other forums, and/or transactional matters.

I have been fortunate to have had a legal career that has spanned nearly 2 decades and has taken me all over the country to represent numerous different clients before numerous different tribunals. During my initial 7 years of practicing, I had the opportunity to travel to New York, Miami, Las Vegas, Charlotte, and St. Louis just to name a few defending large, national brokerage firms such as Raymond James, Wachovia, UBS and the securities subsidiary of Bank of America in multi-million dollar cases. During this time period, I had the great honor and privilege of serving second chair to the most talented attorney and consistently ranked "Super Lawyer" I know - Shepherd Tate - who engrained in me a drive for perfection, an eye for detail and the importance of passion in advocacy. These and other qualities that I learned from my mentor and role model Shep Tate have remained with me throughout my life and have served to shape and mark my entire legal career. In fact, I was able to take everything that I learned from Shep Tate and utilize it to start and build a very successful plaintiff's practice in securities and

investment-related litigation and arbitration that similarly allowed me to travel to various parts of the country to appear before various tribunals – federal district courts, state trial courts and NASD arbitration panels from New York to Miami.

During the course of my above-described practice, I also appeared before regulatory bodies representing clients. Specifically, I appeared before the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, the New York Stock Exchange, the NASD and the Chicago Board Options Exchange.

As the Managing Attorney for the Foreign Language Immersion Early Childhood Center & Preparatory Academy for roughly 6 years, I represented the school before government regulatory bodies, including, but not limited to, the Department of Children & Families, which oversaw licensing and auditing. I also represented the school before administrative bodies, including, but not limited to, addressing unemployment compensation claims. Additionally, I represented the school in relation to all transactional matters.

While the majority of my career has been in the private sector, I have also had the privilege of working in the public sector for over 6 years, advocating for two of society’s most vulnerable victims – children and animals. As a Senior Attorney for the Florida Department of Children & Families, I appeared regularly before the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida, representing the interests of child abuse victims. As an Assistant District Attorney in the Child Support Division for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, I appeared regularly before the Decatur, Hardin and Henry County Chancery and Juvenile Courts to ensure that children received appropriate financial provision from their parent(s). During this same time period, I was also permitted to pursue a personal passion for the protection of animals and prosecuted animal abuse cases in General Sessions Courts in the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

Over the past year, as an Assistant District Attorney in the Criminal Division for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, I appear in court at least 4 days per week and sometimes 5 days per week across Benton, Carroll, Decatur and Henry Counties in both General Sessions and Circuit Court, prosecuting vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, DUI related and HMVO cases.

This year, I have also had the privilege of assisting my husband, TN State Representative Bruce Griffey, in drafting legislation and appearing before the House Criminal Justice Subcommittee to testify in support of such legislation. Specifically, I wrote the TN Protection of Animal Welfare & Safety Act, also known as the TN PAWS Act (HB852/SB3275) , which was intended to overhaul Tennessee’s animal welfare laws to bring Tennessee up from a “middle tier” ranked state to a “top tier” state in relation to animal protection. Specifically, it called for increasing felony classification for certain animal related crimes, creating harsher penalties with mandatory minimum sentences and fines earmarked to financially support animal shelters and animal rescue organizations, mandating ownership and animal possession prohibition periods for individuals convicted of abuse and/or neglect, requiring individuals convicted of bestiality to register as a sex offender, etc. I also wrote the TN Drugged Driving & School Zone Safety Act (HB716/SB3468), which would create a per se DUI offense of driving while a person’s blood contains illegal drugs and would enhance penalties for DUI offenses committed in a school zone.

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

In addition to my passion for children and animals, another issue in which I developed an interest in the course of working in the Child Support Division is that of expungement. Over the course of several years legally pursuing parents who were failing to satisfy their child support obligations, I wanted to address the root issue of why the obligations were not being satisfied. One reoccurring issue was the inability to gain employment due to old criminal records. As a result, I became actively involved with the Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance, an initiative of the Tennessee Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission, and began participating in expungement clinics before General Sessions Courts in West Tennessee to assist individuals with expunging their criminal records and also waiving court costs to allow them to obtain reinstatement of their driver's license. I also organized the first expungement clinic in Henry County, which occurred on August 12, 2017 as a result of a partnership between the TN Faith & Justice Alliance, the Paris First United Methodist Church, Judge Vicki Snyder and Court Clerk Mike Wilson and his staff. It was a very successful event that served roughly 75 individuals, some of whom were hopefully able to obtain gainful employment and become contributing members of society as a result of the expungements they received. I am continuing to work with the TN Faith & Justice Alliance, Judge Snyder and Court Clerk Mike Wilson along with Dr. Dandrige with the Quinn Chapel AME Church to organize an ongoing monthly expungement clinic in Henry County.

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

I organized the first Veterans Legal Clinic in Paris (Henry County), Tennessee in 2017, which offered free legal assistance to veterans. This clinic was a partnership between the TN Faith & Justice Alliance, the Henry County Veterans Service Office and the Paris First United Methodist Church and also included local organizations to assist veterans with employment, housing, food and counseling.

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

None

### 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.

Harvard University – 1992

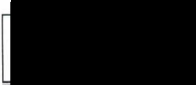
Smith College – 1993; I had a desire to attend an all female educational institution similar to the environment provided by Hutchison School where I graduated from high school in Memphis. I left due to a desire to return home from Massachusetts to Tennessee.

Rhodes College – 1994 – 1997; I graduated in May 1997 Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree. I majored in Psychology with a minor in Women’s Studies. I was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Psi Chi Academic Honor Society in Psychology. I also received the Susan Tidball Means Award in Women’s Studies.

University of Memphis School of Law – 1997 – 2000; I graduated in the top 3% of my class in May 2000 Magna Cum Laude with a Juris Doctorate degree. I was a Law Review Staff member, Moot Court Board member and a student member of American Inn of Court. I received the Best Trial Notebook award for the 1998-1999 Mock Trial Competition, and was a National Mock Trial Competition Quarter Finalist. I received the American Jurisprudence Award in Evidence, Trial Advocacy, Family Law, Administrative Law, Securities Regulation and Business Organization.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

12. State your date of birth.

 1975

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

I was born and raised in Memphis, (Shelby County) Tennessee, and resided in Memphis continuously for approximately 18 years -- from birth until leaving for college in the Northeast. I returned to Memphis (Shelby County) to complete my undergraduate studies at Rhodes College where I graduated in May 1997 and to attend the University of Memphis School of Law where I graduated in May 2000. I remained in Memphis (Shelby County) for approximately 10 years until I transferred to the Tampa, Florida, office of Tate Lazarini in 2007. I returned to Tennessee in November 2013 to reside in Paris (Henry County) where I have lived for the past 5 ½ years.

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

I have lived continuously in Henry County where I presently reside for 5 ½ years.

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

Henry County

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.

None

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.

To my knowledge, I am not under any "investigation". However, in the interest of full disclosure, an online complaint was submitted on March 14, 2019 by a third party without any first hand factual knowledge with the Consumer Assistance Program of the Board of Professional Responsibility concerning a witness outline that I prepared for my personal use in preparation for a jury trial based upon attestations made by the arresting officer in official law enforcement reports. No allegation was made regarding any specific rule violation.

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.

See response to Question No. 18 above.

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.

I was a party to a divorce proceeding with my prior husband, Francis Moffit, in Shelby County while attending law school. I believe the divorce was finalized in 1998 or 1999. I contacted the Chancery Clerk and Circuit Clerk for Shelby County in order to obtain the docket number and date; however, the clerks were unable to provide any records or information.

I was also a party to a civil suit initiated by David Alsup against my husband and me before the General Sessions Court of Henry County, Dckt. No. 40GS1-2015-CV-97. It was filed in January 2015 and involved a dispute over the construction of a horse barn that my husband retained Alsup to complete on our property. Specifically, the dispute arose over the amount of time required to perform certain construction work and the amount of money claimed by Alsup for work completed by him prior to termination by us. Settlement was attempted but rejected by Alsup. At first court appearance, a \$2,500 settlement offer was made by us and rejected by Alsup. A bench trial before Judge Jimmy Smith in the Fall of 2015, ended with judgment for Alsup in the amount of \$2,750, which included all court costs and interest to date. Payment in full was tendered to Henry County General Sessions Court Clerk Mike Wilson.

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.

Rotary, Athena Delphian Club, Tennessee Republican Party Capitol Club, Henry County Republican Party, Paris/Henry County Republican Women, Weakley County Republican Women, Tennessee Federation of Republican Women, Misty Morning Foxhounds Hunt Club, Southcreek Foxhounds Hunt Club

With respect to the Athena Delphian Club, I served as Chair of the Fall Fundraiser Committee 2015-2016 and Publicity Chair 2017-2018.

With respect to the Henry County Republican Party, I served as Treasurer 2014-2015.

With respect to the Paris/Henry County Republican Women, I served as President 2014-2015,

Aug. 2016 – March 2018, and our club was presented with both state and national awards during my tenure as President.

With respect to the Tennessee Federation of Republican Women, I served as Area Vice-President 2015 - March 2018, and I served as Chair of the Nominating Committee 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.
- 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.

I was a member of the Athena Delphian Club, which limits membership eligibility to women residing in Henry County. The purpose of the organization is to work actively in the community for civic improvement. I resigned my membership in said organization in November 2018 due to my active court schedule, which prevented me from consistently attending meetings.

### **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.

Henry County Bar Association (2014 – Present), Henry County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Council (2015-Present), TN Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission Faith-Based Initiatives Committee (2017-Present), Henry County Prevention Coalition (2018 – Present)

While practicing in Memphis, I was also an active member of the Memphis Bar Association, serving on the CLE Programs, Bench Bar Conference and Publications Committees and chairing the Historic Bar Committee. Additionally, I was an active member of the Association for Women Attorneys in Memphis, serving as CLE Program Coordinator in 2001 and Secretary in 2002.

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.

In January 2005, after less than 5 years of practice following graduation from law school, I earned the title of partner at the law firm of Tate Lazarini (which merged with Bass Berry & Sims in 2007). Thereafter, in or around February 2006, I was awarded by Martindale-Hubbell with the prestigious AV Preeminent rating, which is the highest peer rating standard signifying the highest level of professional excellence for legal knowledge, communication skills and ethical standards. It was my understanding at the time that I was one of the youngest and shortest practicing attorneys to receive such award. In March 2014, I completed the Tennessee Rule 31 Civil Mediator training program. In December 2017, I was the recipient of the Tennessee Department of Human Services Impact Award presented by DHS Commissioner Danielle Barnes in recognition of me going above and beyond my normal job responsibilities in serving clients of the District Attorney's Office in the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. The award was the result of numerous outreach activities I implemented in the district, including, but not limited to, presenting "What's the Rush" program to middle and high school students to combat teen pregnancy, organizing an annual "No Blue Christmas" event to distribute Christmas gifts to children from low-income or impoverished families who were the subject of pending cases in the D.A.'s office, and implementing a "Saturday Settlement Day" whereby child support defendants, who are employed and working during the week, could come to the D.A.'s office on Saturdays to resolve their case.

Additionally, I have authored a number of published articles, including, but not limited to:

Enforceability of Pre-Dispute Arbitration Agreements in Securities Industry Employment Discrimination Claims, 30 U. Mem. L. Rev. 857 (2000);

Arbitrator's Powers To Issue Sanctions In Securities Arbitrations, Tennessee Bar Association Website (December 2001);

A Refocus on the Issue of Punitive Damages: But What Does It Mean To Businesses?, Memphis Business Journal (June 2006);

The Changing Face of the Tennessee Supreme Court, Memphis Lawyer Magazine (July/August 2006); and

Has Arbitration Fallen Out Of Favor? A Corporate Litigant's Perspective, Memphis Lawyer Magazine (September/October 2006).

I have also served as the speaker at a number of seminars and events, including, but not limited to:

A Question of Law: Securities Law Issues (The Library Channel, Nov. 2001);

The Law of Expert Testimony, National Business Institute CLE (2004);

Aligning Your Pleadings and Motions With Current Legislative Updates, National Business Institute CLE (2006); and

Best Practices and Procedures in TN Child Support Cases, Hardin County Bar Association CLE (2017).

I have also spoken at various civic and political organization meetings such as Quota Club, the Pickwick Republican Women, the Benton County GOP, the Henry County GOP, and the Weakley County GOP & Republican Women on a variety of topics, including, but not limited to child advocacy, animal advocacy, the success of faith-based substance abuse recovery programs and welfare reform.

27. List any public office you have held or for which you have been candidate or applicant. Include the date, the position, and whether the position was elective or appointive.

I ran on the ballot in the August 2018 election to serve as State Executive Committeewoman for the Tennessee Republican Party for the 24<sup>th</sup> Senate District. I was elected to said position and continue to serve in such capacity.

### **ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

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

From the very beginning of my legal career in law school, participating in the mock trial and moot court program and serving as a member of the Moot Court Board, I had a natural gravitation to courtroom practice and a personal life goal of sitting on the bench one day. Nearly two decades later as a practicing trial attorney, after having amassed a diversity of experience with respect to:

- types of cases (civil and criminal, domestic and commercial, ranging in complexity from a 2-3 week long securities fraud trial to a 1 day DUI trial),
- geographic practice area (practicing in both large cities and small rural towns across multiple states),
- tribunals (appearing before state and federal courts, Juvenile, General Sessions, Circuit and Chancery courts, arbitration panels and regulatory bodies and first chairing hearings, bench trials and jury trials),
- employers (having experienced working in both the private and public sector, in a large regional firm with a nationwide practice and as a solo practitioner), and
- clients (having represented international corporations to individuals both wealthy and impoverished to the State of Tennessee and the State of Florida),

I feel that I am now amply qualified to step out of the role as trial attorney and advocate and into the role of trial court judge. I firmly believe that the depth and diversity of my experience will allow me to better understand, appreciate and objectively evaluate the differing and relative positions of a diverse range of parties across a diverse range of matters.

Additionally, children have been a deep seated passion of mine since the day I became a mother myself 16 years ago and had the indescribable, transformational experience of bringing new life into this world and being charged with the all-important and all-encompassing responsibility of being a parent. I have not only prioritized the needs of my own children, but have also spent a significant portion of my career providing for the needs of other children and advocating for their protection and interests. For example, I left a very lucrative, national securities practice to work as a Senior Attorney for the Florida Department of Children & Families. I did this not only to minimize my travel and have more time at home with my own children, but also to advocate in court for the interests of children who were the victims of abuse and neglect. I founded a private school in Celebration, Florida, based on my desire to not only provide my own children with a better education, but also to provide a better educational foundation to other children in the community. The school was a phenomenal success and grew from its start as an early childhood center into an elementary school with students performing at the top of the state in test scores based on the utilization of alternative Asian and Finnic educational models and approaches. I, thereafter, accepted a position in the Child Support Division of the District Attorney General's Office of the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District so I could continue my passion of helping children and ensuring that their needs are satisfied. In such role, I also implemented a number of programs to help parents better position themselves to help their children. I have also focused on participation in community organizations geared towards improving the lives of children to better position them for a long-term successful future, having served on the Henry County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Council and the Prevention Coalition. In light of the fact that approximately 53% of the cases that come before the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Chancery Court are domestic, I believe that sitting in the role of Chancellor would allow me to continue to positively impact the lives of children at a professional level.

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 seeking appointment to the position of Chancellor for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, which encompasses a 5 county region consisting of Benton, Carroll, Decatur, Hardin and Henry Counties. There are presently 3 trial court judges for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District – 2 Circuit Court Judges, who hear both criminal and civil matters, and 1 Chancellor, who hears a variety of civil matters.

The Chancellor position was vacated by the Honorable Carma Dennis McGee, who to my knowledge was the first female appointed to serve in such position and who has been the only female to serve in a trial court position in the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. In fact, among all Juvenile, General Sessions, Circuit and Chancery Courts across the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, she has been 1 of only 2 female judges to serve along with Judge Vicki Snyder, the General Sessions and Juvenile Court Judge for Henry County. For this reason, I believe that it is critical that a female successor be appointed to ensure that there remains some diversity on the bench in the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

Additionally, I believe that the candidate selected should come from Henry County to provide

geographic diversity to the trial court seats in the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and to reflect the relative weight of the Chancery Court caseload across the 5 county district. Presently, 2 of the 3 trial court seats in the district are represented by Carroll County and Hardin County, and geographically, Henry County (the largest county in the district by population) should have representation on the trial court bench.

Moreover, Henry County has the largest Chancery Court caseload in the entire judicial district – significantly larger than any other county in the district. For example, according to statistics maintained by the Tennessee Administrative Office the Courts, over the 5 year period from July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2018, the following number of divorces were filed in Chancery Court in each of the respective counties ranked in order from highest to lowest number:

Henry County – 658

Benton County - 418

Carroll County – 403

Decatur County -- 177

Hardin County – 43

Inasmuch as I am a female from Henry County, I believe that my selection as Chancellor would provide needed gender and geographic diversity for the trial court seats in the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and also appropriately reflect and correlate with the distributive weight of the Chancery Court caseload in the district.

Furthermore, since having been licensed since 2000, I believe that I will likely be one of the longest practicing candidates, if not the longest practicing candidate applying for the position, as well as the candidate with the most diverse experience and background both with respect to areas of law in which I have practiced and the geographic areas in which I have practiced. My nearly 2 decades of being a trial lawyer in both large metropolitan cities and small rural towns across multiple states has equipped me with a significant depth of experience that will be of tremendous value serving in the position of Chancellor.

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 am unequivocally committed to upholding the law even in the face of disagreeing with the substance of it. In the words of Justice Scalia, "If you are going to be a good and faithful judge, you have to resign yourself to the fact that you're not always going to like the conclusions you reach. If you like them all the time, you're probably doing something wrong."

Public confidence in our justice system is intimately tied to respect for the rule of law, which is our ultimate safeguard against anarchy. Indeed, Scottish philosopher David Hume aptly

described two conflicting, yet complementary principles: "Liberty, which preserves individuals; and authority which preserves society." Hume went on to state that "A great sacrifice of liberty has to be made to authority which must be acknowledged essential to its very existence." While I may have personal feelings or opinions as part of my individual liberty and free thought, those personal feelings or opinions must succumb to authority - the rule of law. Otherwise, uncontrolled liberty will destroy society.

One example of an instance when I disagreed with the law, but nevertheless followed the law occurred in a child-related case when I was working as a Senior Attorney for the Florida Department of Children & Families. An infant child had been removed from the household of her parents due to drug use resulting in the parents' ultimate homelessness and inability to meet the needs of the infant. The infant was placed temporarily in the custody of husband/wife foster parents, who were unable to have children themselves and were very eager to welcome the infant into their home and more than satisfy all of the infant's needs. The parents were given an opportunity to achieve certain goals in order to regain custody of their child, and, over an extended period of time, they ended up meeting those goals. However, over the same period of time, the foster parents had grown very attached to the infant, who was flourishing in their care, and the foster parents were hoping the State would proceed with terminating parental rights so they could adopt the infant. Despite feeling in my heart of hearts that the foster parents could provide a better life for the infant and could better position the infant for a successful long-term future as an adult, the law did not provide a basis for termination of rights, and I was required to follow the letter of the law, which resulted in the infant being returned to the biological parents.

### 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. TN State House Representative Andy Holt, [REDACTED] and TN Congressman Mark Green, [REDACTED]

B. Matthew Jones, Chair of the Benton County Republican Party, [REDACTED] Tess Robbins, Chair of the Henry County Republican Party, [REDACTED] and Linda Buckles, Immediate Past President of the Tennessee Federation of Republican Women, TN Republican Party SEC Committeewoman for Senate District 4, and TN Republican Party 2018 Statesman of the Year, [REDACTED]

C. Shepherd D. Tate, Esq., Bass, Berry & Sims, Leader of Broker-Dealer & Financial Products Litigation Practice Group, [REDACTED] Chris Lazarini, Esq., Bass, Berry & Sims, [REDACTED] and Michael Brady, Esq., Bass, Berry & Sims, [REDACTED]

D. Joni Hargrove, [REDACTED] Rick Williams, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] and Patricia Mills, [REDACTED] (personal friends all of whom were  
actively involved in Bill Lee for Governor campaign)

E. Sergeant Joshua Adam Potts, Tennessee Highway Patrol, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] and Henry County Sheriff's Deputy Ricky Wade, [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 Chancellor for the 24<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: May 29, 2019.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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.

Rebecca Griffey  
Type or Print Name

  
Signature

May 29, 2019  
Date

20711  
BPR #

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

Florida Bar, License No. 492671

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