

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

1/31/19

Name: Shon DeBrock Johnson

Office Address: 104 North Market Street, Paris, Tennessee 38242 (Henry County)  
(including county)

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Home Address: [REDACTED] Paris, Tennessee 38242 (Henry County)  
(including county)

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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.

Self-employed in private practice.

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

Licensed to practice in Tennessee in 2005; BPR # 024530

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.

Licensed to practice in Tennessee in 2005; BPR # 024530; License is currently active.

Licensed to practice in Arkansas in 2005; BPR # 2005042; License is currently 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).

Yes, temporarily. I attended and graduated from law school in Tennessee in May 2004. I sat for the Arkansas bar exam in July 2004, instead of sitting for the Tennessee bar exam, after receiving a job offer in Arkansas. Unfortunately, an in-person bar exam review course was not offered where I resided so I was unable to attend such a course for the Arkansas bar exam. As a result, I did not pass this examination by less than two (2) points. After applying to retake the examination, I temporarily relocated to Little Rock, Arkansas so that I could attend an in-person bar exam review course. I successfully passed the Arkansas bar exam in February 2005. As part of this examination, my answer to the exam question in the area of Torts received the designation of a top paper by the Arkansas State Board of Law Examiners and was published in the Arkansas Supreme Court Library as a model answer from the examination.

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).

Employment/Experience since the completion of legal education:

1/2011 – Present Law Office of Shon D. Johnson, Paris, Tennessee.

1/2008 – 1/2011 Black, McLaren, Jones, Ryland & Griffee, Memphis, Tennessee, Associate.

8/2005 – 12/2007 Domico Kyle, PLLC, (formerly known as McLeary, Domico & Kyle, PLLC), Memphis, Tennessee, Associate.

5/2004 – 7/2005 Rieves, Rubens, & Mayton, West Memphis, Arkansas, Associate.

Employment/Experience prior to the completion of legal education:

1/2004 – 5/2004 United States Attorney's Office, Memphis, Tennessee, Law Clerk.

5/2002 – 5/2004 Rieves, Rubens, & Mayton, West Memphis, Arkansas, Law Clerk.

8/2001 – 5/2004 University of Memphis School of Law, Law Student.

1/2000 – 8/2001 Federal Express, World Headquarters, Memphis, Tennessee, Internal Auditor.

8/1998 – 1/2000 Trammell Crow Corporate Services, Memphis, Tennessee, Staff Accountant.

5/1998 – 8/1998 ESI Companies, Inc., Memphis, Tennessee, Accountant.

8/1994 – 8/1998 University of Tennessee, Martin, Tennessee, Student.

10/1997 – 5/1998 Uarco – Standard Register, Fulton, Kentucky, Accounting Intern.

5/1997 – 8/1997 Super D. Drugs, Inc. (Headquarters), Memphis, Tennessee, Accounting Clerk.

12/1996 – 1/1997 Super D. Drugs, Inc. (Headquarters), Memphis, Tennessee, Accounting Clerk.

5/1996 – 8/1996 Super D. Drugs, Inc. (Headquarters), Memphis, Tennessee, Accounting Clerk.

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 present law practice primarily consists of cases that are heard by the Chancery Court and Juvenile Court. The major areas of law in those cases relate to divorce, custody, child support, dependency/neglect, termination of parental rights, probate, wills/estates, property disputes, and contract disputes. My present law practice also consists of business, corporate, employment, and governmental matters as I serve as the County Attorney for Benton County and the attorney for Henry County Medical Center. A small portion of my present practice consists of handling criminal matters. Overall, by percentage, my total practice is approximately 60% family law, 15% corporate/governmental, 10% property/contract disputes, 10% probate, and 5% criminal law.

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 a practicing attorney for approximately fourteen (14) years. During the first half of that time period, I was employed in mid-sized law firms and my experience primarily focused on working on cases related to insurance defense which consisted of representing hospitals, physicians, and nurses in medical malpractice lawsuits and representing other types of professionals or companies in civil litigation. I also worked on other cases related to family law and general civil law. During the second half of that time period, I was self-employed in private practice and my experience has primarily focused on handling cases in Chancery Court, Juvenile Court, General Sessions Court, and Circuit Court related to divorce, custody, child support, dependency/neglect (both as guardian ad litem and parents' attorney), termination of parental rights (both as guardian ad litem and parents' attorney), probate, wills/estates, property disputes, contract disputes, business matters, corporate matters, labor/employment, governmental matters, personal injury, and criminal matters (trial court and post-conviction).

In addition to appearing for clients in a trial court, I have regularly handled transactional matters for clients which include the preparation of powers of attorney, wills, estate planning, contracts, and the formation of business entities.

I have also represented clients in four (4) appeals to the Tennessee Court of Appeals in cases related to family law and one (1) appeal to the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals related to a post-conviction criminal matter.

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

Not Applicable.

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

I was appointed by the Tennessee Supreme Court to serve on the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners Investigating Committee from 2014 through 2019. In 2016, I could no longer serve on such committee because I was appointed by the Tennessee Supreme Court to serve as an examiner on the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners from 2016 through 2021. As an examiner, my duties including researching and drafting essay questions and answers for bar exams and grading applicants' answers to such questions.

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 at Martin (1994 – 1998)

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Cum Laude, Major: Accounting

National Dean's List (1995, 1996, 1997, 1998)

All-American Scholar (1995, 1996, 1997, 1998)

CCSA Study Abroad in London, International Finance (1997)

University of Memphis, Graduate School of Business

GPA 4.0 (only 1 semester completed)

I was employed full-time as an accountant at Trammell Crow Corporate Services when I enrolled in this class. I successfully completed this class, but was unable to enroll later in any other courses due to accepting employment with Federal Express. My employment as an internal auditor at Federal Express required me to travel across the United States and out of the country for extended periods of time to perform audits of the company.

University of Memphis, Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law (2001 – 2004)

Juris Doctorate – May 2004

Dean’s Distinguished Service Award

Who’s Who Among College Students Award

Leo Bearman, Sr. American Inn of Court (Pupil Member)

Associate Justice of the Moot Court Board

United States Attorney’s Office (One of only two law students selected for this externship)

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

12. State your date of birth.

1975

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

Approximately 39 years.

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

I have resided in Henry County, Tennessee since returning from Memphis in 2011. I previously resided in Henry County while I attended high school from 1991 to 1994.

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

Henry 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.

Not Applicable.

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.

In July 2013, I was appointed by the Weakley County Juvenile Court to represent an indigent mother in a dependency/neglect and custody case that lasted for two (2) years. During my representation of the mother, we were able to reunite her with her children and successfully defended against an attempt to modify custody by the father at trial in April 2015. In May 2015, I received a letter from the Consumer Assistance Program of the Board of Professional Responsibility wherein the father filed a complaint on the basis that he felt it was unfair that I represented mother and prevailed at the custody trial while he spent a substantial amount of money for a private attorney. I responded to the letter from the Consumer Assistance Program regarding my appointment to the case by the Weakley County Juvenile Court and provided documentation regarding same. The case was closed and dismissed thereafter.

In November 2016, I was retained to represent a client in a highly contentious post-divorce matter involving a dispute between the client and the client's ex-wife over a substantial amount of alimony in the range of \$500,000.00 to \$1,000,000.00 and other provisions from their Marital Dissolution Agreement. The ex-wife initiated the post-divorce matter seeking contempt for my client's alleged failure to pay the correct monthly amount of alimony. On behalf of the client, I filed a counter-petition requesting the trial court to clarify my client's obligations due to the agreement being ambiguous or to modify or terminate the alimony payments. I did not represent the client in the original divorce. During the proceedings, I and my client discovered that the ex-wife had intentionally destroyed evidence requested in discovery and that ex-wife and ex-wife's counsel were involved in an extra-marital affair in violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct. During the proceedings, the ex-wife would also make derogatory personal comments

about me and would send such comments to me in the form of answers to discovery. After obtaining evidence of the inappropriate relationship between the ex-wife and ex-wife's counsel, I notified the trial court. During a chamber conference with the trial court and opposing counsel, the trial court expressed that I was correct regarding the conflict of interest and urged opposing counsel to withdraw. After the chamber conference, I filed a motion to disqualify ex-wife's counsel and ex-wife's counsel was thereafter forced to withdraw from the representation based upon a conflict of interest. Two (2) days after ex-wife's counsel withdrew from the representation, the ex-wife obtained new counsel and filed a motion to disqualify me from the case based upon an allegation that I had harassed ex-wife during the discovery phase of the case by making comments to her counsel and because her employer was another client of mine. After hearing two (2) days of testimony, the trial court denied the ex-wife's motion to disqualify me and held that I had not violated any provision of the Rules of Professional Conduct or otherwise. Within three (3) weeks of the trial court's ruling that I had not violated the Rules of Professional Conduct, the ex-wife filed a complaint with the Board of Professional Responsibility on January 26, 2018. Even though the trial court had issued a ruling that I had not violated any provision of the Rules of Professional Conduct, the Board of Professional Responsibility subsequently issued a confidential private informal admonition in November 2018, on the basis that I failed to respect the rights of third persons and closed its case. In its decision, the Board noted that in mitigation, I had no history of prior discipline in thirteen (13) years of practice. Based upon the rules, a private informal admonition is the lowest level infraction and is a form of non-public discipline for situations involving an isolated incident or is minor.

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.

In 2007, I worked as an associate attorney in which my law firm was defending a dentist and anesthesiology group in a medical malpractice lawsuit. Our firm's clients prevailed in this initial



lawsuit. After we prevailed, the individual plaintiff was upset with the trial court's decision and filed a separate lawsuit against me, my clients, and my clients' insurance carrier. The case was filed on October 26, 2007 in the Shelby County General Sessions Court, styled Barbara Becton v. Metro Anesthesia Alliance, ProAssurance Professional Group, Dr. Felix Stanfield, Dove Family Dentistry, and Shon Johnson. The separate case was dismissed in January 2008.

In 2008, my former employer/law firm filed a declaratory action to resolve a dispute regarding my compensation after I left to work for another law firm. The case was filed on June 12, 2008 in the Shelby County Chancery Court, styled Domico Kyle, PLLC v. Shon D. Johnson. I filed a counter complaint on August 14, 2008. The case was resolved by amicable settlement and dismissed in November 2018.

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 Christian Church in Paris, Henry County, Tennessee. I have served on the Church's Board of Trustees since approximately 2015.

I have also been involved with Paris and Henry County youth sports programs as a coach and sponsor since 2016.

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.

While a student at the University of Tennessee at Martin, I was a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity from 1994 to 1998. The membership was limited to male students. I am currently classified as an alumnae of the organization and my participation is very limited.

### **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.

Tennessee Bar Association (Member 2006-2019)

Tennessee Bar Association – House of Delegates (2010-2012)

Memphis Bar Association (Member 2005-2019)

Memphis Bar Association – YLD Board of Directors (Past President 2011)

Memphis Bar Association – YLD Board of Directors (President 2010)

Memphis Bar Association – YLD Board of Directors (Vice President 2009)

Memphis Bar Association – YLD Board of Directors (Member 2008)

Memphis Bar Association – Leadership Forum (Mentor 2008-2010)

Memphis Bar Association – Leadership Forum (Participant 2007-2008)

Memphis Bar Association – House of Delegates (2008)

Leo Bearman, Sr. American Inn of Court (Barrister 2012)

Leo Bearman, Sr. American Inn of Court (Pupil 2011)

Henry County Bar Association (Member 2011-2019)

W.G. Rhea Public Library Board of Directors (2011-2015)

Henry County Health Care Foundation – Board of Directors (Past President 2017-2018)

Henry County Health Care Foundation – Board of Directors (President 2014-2016)

Henry County Health Care Foundation – Board of Directors (Vice President 2013-2014)

Henry County Exchange Club – Carl Perkins Center (Board Member 2012-2015)

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.

In February 2014, I applied for the position of County Attorney for Henry County. The position is appointed by the County Commission.

In May 2018, I applied for the position of Judge with the City of Paris after the previous Judge retired. The position is appointed by the City Commission.

In August 2018, I applied for the position of County Attorney for Benton County. The position is appointed by the Mayor.

**ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

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

The Court serves as an institution that provides all people with an equal opportunity to be heard and their case decided by an impartial judge. The Chancellor is the bedrock to this institution and must ensure that these principles are met. I was raised in a modest home and experienced the effects of a divorce at a very young age. Although those memories kept me from practicing family law in my first few years as an attorney, the experience has provided me a basis of understanding to relate to my family law clients over the last ten (10) years. The types of cases heard in the Chancery Court primarily relate to families through divorce, custody, termination of parental rights, adoption, and probate matters. Although I am married and never divorced, my personal experience with family law both as a child with divorced parents and as a practicing attorney handling such matters for years has provided me an adequate understanding of the what these families are contending with as litigants before the Court as well as the necessary understanding of the law that applies to their case. For family law and the other types of civil cases heard by the Chancery Court, I possess a business and accounting background that also provides a unique understanding of the financial intricacies involved in such cases. Aside from possessing the experience and knowledge necessary to serve as Chancellor, I have exhibited the fortitude to pursue what is right and appropriate personally and professionally regardless of whether, at times, there are consequences for such pursuit. In fact, a large percentage of my clients have selected me as their attorney on this basis as well as me being independent and impartial in the legal community. Upon reflection and examination of my personal history, I believe that I would be well-suited to serve as Chancellor based upon my experience and proven dedication.

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)

The judgeship that I am applying is for the Chancellor of the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, which currently comprises of five (5) counties including Benton, Carroll, Decatur, Hardin, and Henry. The 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District consists of two (2) Circuit Court Judges, one (1) Chancellor, and one (1) Judge for each of the General Sessions Courts and Juvenile Courts in each individual county. The types of cases heard by a Chancery Court is determined by statute and typically include cases of divorce, child custody, child support, contempt, termination of parental rights, adoption, contract disputes, business disputes, injunctions, and real property disputes. My selection as the Chancellor of the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District would provide a positive impact on the Court because it places a candidate in the position who possesses the business/accounting background necessary to fully understand the details of these types of cases, the experience of handling these types of cases, and the requisite humility to relate to the people who appear before the Court.

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 will uphold the law even if I disagree with the substance of the law at issue. Although there is a risk of an apparent unfair result from the strict application of the law, a judge has an obligation to apply the law to the facts of a case and render an impartial decision.

One example from my practice as an attorney involved a dependency/neglect case filed by the Department of Children's Services. I was appointed by the Juvenile Court as the guardian ad litem to represent the children's best interests. After an extended period of time, the parents substantially complied with the steps set forth by the Department of Children's Services and the Department reunited the children with their parents. Although I had personal feelings that the parents had only completed the minimum effort for the return of their children and had only ceased using illegal drugs for a limited time period, the law did not support the denial of the return of the children when the Department made its decision. I accepted the Department's decision and the return of the children. Unfortunately, I was correct in my assessment of the parents and the children were removed by the Department again about one year later after being further subjected to the treatment. I was reappointed by the Juvenile Court to serve as the guardian ad litem. In this subsequent case, custody of the children was ultimately awarded to another family member who could properly care for them.

### 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. Brett Lashlee, Benton County Mayor, [REDACTED]

B. Lisa Casteel, Chief Executive Officer, Henry County Medical Center, [REDACTED]
C. Kate Rhodes, Chief Operations Officer/General Counsel, PMB Services, Inc., [REDACTED]
D. James Smith, Attorney/Shareholder, Hagwood & Tipton, [REDACTED]
E. Pam Moultrie, Commercial Bank & Trust (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 Chancellor of 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.

  
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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.

Shon D. Johnson  
Type or Print Name

Shon D. Johnson  
Signature

May 29, 2019  
Date

024530  
BPR #

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

Arkansas , BPR # 2005042

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