

Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office
3/4/26

Name: Christopher J. Lareau

Office Address: 201 Poplar Ave, 11th Floor, Memphis, Shelby County, TN, 38103
(including county)

Office Phone: 901-222-1544 Facsimile: _____

Email Address:

Home Address:
(including county)

Home Phone:

INTRODUCTION

Tennessee Code Annotated section 17-4-301 et seq. charges the Trial Court Vacancy Commission with assisting the Governor and the People of Tennessee in finding and appointing the best qualified candidates for judicial offices in this State. Please consider the Commission's responsibility in answering the questions in this application questionnaire. For example, when a question asks you to "describe" certain things, please provide a description that contains relevant information about the subject of the question and, especially, that contains detailed information that demonstrates that you are qualified for the judicial office you seek. In order to properly evaluate your application, the Commission needs information about the range of your experience, the depth and breadth of your legal knowledge, and your personal traits such as integrity, fairness, and work habits.

This document is available in Microsoft Word format from the Administrative Office of the Courts (telephone 800-448-7970 or 615-741-2687; website www.tncourts.gov). The Commission requests that applicants obtain the Microsoft Word form and respond directly on the form. Respond in the box provided below each question. (The box will expand as you type in the document.) Review the separate instruction sheet prior to completing this document. Your complete application, including both the original and digital copies, must be received by the Administrative Office of the Courts on or before the deadline prescribed in the Notice of Vacancy. See section 1(g) of the application instructions for additional information related to hand-delivery of application packages.

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

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE

1. State your present employment.

First Deputy DA, Shelby County DA's Office

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

I was licensed to practice law in Tennessee in 2003. My bar number is 22510.

3. List all states in which you have been licensed to practice law and include your bar number or identifying number for each state of admission. Indicate the date of licensure and whether the license is currently active. If not active, explain.

I was licensed in Colorado March 12, 2010. The license is inactive as I do not practice in that state.

4. Have you ever been denied admission to, suspended or placed on inactive status by the Bar of any State? If so, explain. (This applies even if the denial was temporary).

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).

Law Clerk, Law Offices of Claiborne H. Ferguson, Memphis, TN (2002 – 2003)

Associate, The Waggoner Law Firm, Memphis, TN (2003 – 2004)

Associate, Holley, Waldrop, Nearn & Lazarov, P.C. (2004 – 2005)

Asst. D.A., Shelby County DA's Office (2005 to present)

Corporate Banking Analyst, Bank of America Corp. (1997 – 1999)

6. Describe the nature of your present law practice, listing the major areas of law in which you practice and the percentage each constitutes of your total practice.

I am a prosecutor with the Shelby County DA's Office. My practice is 100% 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.

As a law clerk, my primary responsibilities included authoring criminal appellate briefs and trial court motions for the Ferguson Law Firm.

For the year I was with the Waggoner Firm I litigated criminal misdemeanor cases.

Holley, Waldrop was a general practice litigation firm concentrating in insurance defense. My primary responsibilities included case evaluation, witness depositions and drafting/arguing pre-trial motions. I argued motions for summary judgment and tried two civil matters to jury verdict. While at this firm, I accepted criminal defense appointments when a conflict arose with the Public Defender's Office. I represented clients in General Sessions and Criminal Court.

I am currently the First Deputy DA at the Shelby County DA's Office, having served the last 21 years as a prosecutor. My responsibilities include managing 118 lawyers and associated support staff prosecuting approximately 23,000 defendants per year across twenty courtrooms.

My trial duties include all phases of homicide prosecution, having personally litigated or closely supervised the litigation of nearly 100 homicide cases. I have tried 50 cases to jury verdict as a prosecutor, including matters involving homicide, rape, gangs and multiple codefendants.

My administrative duties include interviewing, training, mentoring and evaluating new lawyers. I was a courtroom division leader for approximately five years before being promoted to executive management. I served for two years in the Office's Gang Unit and four years in the Office's Major Violators Unit. I was a legal advisor for the Safe Streets Task Force and the Memphis Police Department's Homicide Unit.

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

I have served as a *pro tem* prosecutor in jurisdictions outside Shelby County, prosecuting a multiple codefendant murder case in the 28th Judicial District.

I was the lead prosecutor in the largest mass-shooting event in the State's history, State of Tennessee v. Ezekiel Kelly.

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

I have experience teaching legal and trial concepts to varying audiences in Tennessee as detailed below.

TN District Attorney General's Conference:

- Instructor, New Prosecutor's Academy, (2014 to present)
- Lecturer, TN DA's Annual Conference, "Social Media Exhibits in Trial" (2018)
- Instructor, TN Prosecutor's Trial Advocacy Academy, (2026 to present)

Shelby County Sheriff's Office Reserve Deputy Academy:

- Lecturer, "Law of Arrest," "Violent Crimes," "Juvenile Law," "Sex Crimes," (2008 – 2019)

I have graduated from the U.S. Department of Justice National Advocacy Center Trial Advocacy Course I (2008), and Trial Advocacy Course II (2010).

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.

Liberty University, 8/91 to 5/92. Transferred to another college.

Harding University, 1/92 to 5/96. B.B.A., Economics, *cum laude*.

University of Colorado School of Law, 8/99 to 5/02. Juris Doctor, Moot Court Board.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

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

24 years.

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

24 years.

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

Shelby

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 my first year of practice with the Waggoner Firm, I inherited a civil case of little merit. I spoke with the plaintiff and received permission to settle the case for nuisance value. The plaintiff later reported me to the Board of Professional Responsibility. I was notified by the Board and sent a letter of response documenting my communication with the plaintiff. That concluded the matter. I was not disciplined.

20. Has a tax lien or other collection procedure been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities or creditors within the last five (5) years? If so, give details.

No.

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

No.

22. Have you ever been a party in any legal proceedings (including divorces, domestic proceedings, and other types of proceedings)? If so, give details including the date, court and docket number and disposition. Provide a brief description of the case. This question does not seek, and you may exclude from your response, any matter where you were involved only as a nominal party, such as if you were the trustee under a deed of trust in a foreclosure proceeding.

No.

23. List all organizations other than professional associations to which you have belonged within the last five (5) years, including civic, charitable, religious, educational, social and fraternal organizations. Give the titles and dates of any offices which you have held in such organizations.

CrimeStoppers of Memphis and Shelby County:

- Board Chair (2023-2025), Executive Committee (2025 to present).

Idlewild Presbyterian Church:

- Recreation Committee (2012 – 2017)
- Coach, girls' soccer (2012 – 2017)

- Member, Youth Minister Search Committee (2025)

STAND for Children

- Chair, Political Endorsement Committee (2011)

Memphis City Schools, volunteer tutor (2011 – 2012)

Streets Ministries, Tutor/Mentor, Pathways Education Program (2005 – 2010)

24. Have you ever belonged to any organization, association, club or society which limits its membership to those of any particular race, religion, or gender? Do not include in your answer those organizations specifically formed for a religious purpose, such as churches or synagogues.
- If so, list such organizations and describe the basis of the membership limitation.
 - If it is not your intention to resign from such organization(s) and withdraw from any participation in their activities should you be nominated and selected for the position for which you are applying, state your reasons.

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.

Memphis Bar Association:

- Criminal Law Section Chair (1/1/2026 to present), Vice Chair (2025)
- MBA Leadership Forum Class of 2009
- MBA Leadership Forum Steering Committee (2009 to 2011)
- MBA Leadership Forum Mentor (2023 to 2025)

American Inns of Court, Leo Bearman, Sr. Section (9/14 to 5/17)

National District Attorney's Association (2023 to present)

National Bar Association, Ben F. Jones Chapter (2021 to present)

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.

Fellow, Memphis Bar Foundation (2022 to present). Fellows are chosen based on their devoted and distinguished service to the legal profession and the administration of justice and their adherence to the highest standards of professional ethics and personal conduct.

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 for judge in the 30th Judicial District (Shelby County Criminal Court Div. 5) in the 2022 election cycle.

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

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

I want to decrease the time to disposition for felony cases in Shelby County.

The national average for the disposition of a non-homicide felony case in America is approximately one year. In Shelby County, it is taking us an average of 600 days (and that is an improvement from one year ago when the average was over 700 days).

It should not take 600 days for a victim of a home burglary or aggravated robbery to receive closure and justice. Nor should it take 600 days for a defendant to receive a fair trial or settlement of his case.

Additionally, reducing time to disposition is the most efficient way to reduce the overcapacity jail population at 201 Poplar. If appointed, I will institute the use of scheduling orders for all non-homicide cases to reduce time to disposition.

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 appointment to the 30th Judicial District, which is Shelby County, TN. The district currently has nine criminal courts. The Tennessee Legislature has added two criminal courts to target the backlog of cases in Shelby County and to address violent crime.

I possess the experience, legal knowledge, and demeanor necessary to run an efficient courtroom that provides justice for all parties, rehabilitative probation to deserving nonviolent offenders, and jail sentences intended to deter violent conduct and repeat offenders.

If selected, I will be a collegial, friendly colleague to the currently elected judges. Lawyers, court staff, victims, and defendants will be treated with respect and professionalism. My 23 years of criminal law experience has prepared me to make sound decisions in a timely manner.

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)*

Judges are not the executive branch, nor are they the legislative branch of government. Judges are called to uphold laws as written and understood by the citizenry at the time the law was codified. If the law has become antiquated or no longer serves the people of Tennessee, it is the legislature that is responsible for changing the statute or rule.

Frankly, I cannot think of a law that I have had to enforce as a prosecutor that has run contrary to my opinion on that law. But I do have to make decisions that I find difficult. Police involved actions are illustrative.

I was tasked with reviewing officer conduct wherein the officer acted in derogation of training. The conduct caused a car collision that put a Tennessean in long-term nursing home care for the remainder of his life. This officer is well respected by his command staff and had a distinguished career serving our citizenry. Nevertheless, the conduct, despite being a momentary lapse in judgment spurred by spiked adrenaline, was well beyond just a derogation of policy. The conduct was a "gross deviation from the standard of care" an ordinary officer would exercise in that situation. The gross deviation was unfortunately criminal conduct – reckless, but still criminal. An approval of charges was warranted despite the great sympathy I have for all parties involved in this tragedy.

This example is reflective of the difficult decisions I have had to make my entire career irrespective of my personal feelings.

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.

Judge Chris Craft, 30th Judicial District (Ret.)

Judge Mark Ward, 30th Judicial District (Sr. Status),

Judge Ray Lepone, 30th Judicial District,

Stephen Crump, Executive Director, TN Dist. Atty. Gen. Conference,

Paul Rose, Tennessee State Senator,

AFFIRMATION CONCERNING APPLICATION

Read, and if you agree to the provisions, sign the following:

I have read the foregoing questions and have answered them in good faith and as completely as my records and recollections permit. I hereby agree to be considered for nomination to the Governor for the office of Judge of the [Court] Criminal Court, 30th Judicial District of Tennessee, and if appointed by the Governor, agree to serve that office. In the event any changes occur between the time this application is filed and the public hearing, I hereby agree to file an amended questionnaire with the Administrative Office of the Courts for distribution to the Commission members.

I understand that the information provided in this questionnaire shall be open to public inspection upon filing with the Administrative Office of the Courts and that the Commission may publicize the names of persons who apply for nomination and the names of those persons the Commission nominates to the Governor for the judicial vacancy in question.

Dated: July 11, 2026.


Signature



TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

511 UNION STREET, SUITE 600
NASHVILLE CITY CENTER