

Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office

1/17/23

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INTRODUCTION

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

This document is available in Microsoft Word format from the Administrative Office of the Courts (telephone 800-448-7970 or 615-741-2687; website www.tncourts.gov). 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.

I am an Assistant Attorney General with the Office of the Tennessee Attorney General. I am assigned to the Criminal Appeals Division.

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

I became licensed to practice law in Tennessee in November 1999. My BPR number is 020176.

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

Tennessee is the only state I have been licensed to practice law. I was licensed in November 1999. My license is active.

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

No.

5. List your professional or business employment/experience since the completion of your legal education. Also include here a description of any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law in which you have ever been engaged (excluding military service, which is covered by a separate question).

From November 1999 through October 2000, I worked as an associate in the law firm of Petkoff and Lancaster in Memphis, Tennessee.

From October 2000 through November 2003, I served in the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office as an Assistant District Attorney General in Memphis, Tennessee.

From November 2003 through November 2004, I worked as an associate attorney in the law firm of Apperson, Crump, and Maxwell in Memphis, Tennessee.

In November 2004, I returned to the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office as an Assistant District Attorney. I served as an Assistant District Attorney until I was appointed as a Magistrate Judge in Shelby County Juvenile Court in May 2016.

From May 2016 to February 2018, I served as a Magistrate Judge in Shelby County Juvenile Court until I returned to the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office to manage the Office as the Deputy District Attorney General.

In September 2023, after serving five and half years as the Deputy District Attorney, I retired from the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office and accepted a position as an Assistant Attorney General with the Tennessee Attorney General's Office.

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.

After years of trying major felony cases, serving two years as a magistrate judge, and managing an office with over 200 employees as deputy district attorney, I have spent the last two years serving as an assistant attorney general assigned to the criminal appeals division. My current position is 100% devoted to criminal cases. As an assistant attorney general, it is my job to review the decisions and exercise of discretion of criminal court trial judges across the State of Tennessee. I have filed over 30 appellate briefs, and I have completed oral arguments before the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals in Jackson and Nashville. My service as an assistant attorney general taught me the importance of creating a record for purposes of appeal and has provided me with the opportunity to read trial judges' decisions from guilty pleas to probation hearings to rulings in trials. I read through 1,000-page records and defend and sometimes concede error after researching the law and applying it to the criminal court trial judges' decisions, rulings, and exercise of discretion.

Currently, I am working on several capital cases under the legislation that gave the Attorney General's Office the responsibility to handle certain capital cases on collateral attack in the trial courts. I was recently assigned, along with a team, to work on the State v. Byron Black competency to be executed case (Davidson County). I have completed work in State v. Harold Wayne Nichols (Hamilton County), State v. William Eugene Hall (Humphreys County), and State v. Urshawn Miller (Madison County).

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.

In 1999, I accepted a position with Petkoff and Lancaster because the Shelby County District Attorney's office had no open positions. I had clerked for the Shelby County Criminal Court Judges my last year in law school, and I knew that I wanted to be an Assistant District Attorney.

I learned a lot as a young associate with the Petkoff and Lancaster law firm. I practiced in the area of insurance defense. I took depositions, argued motions in civil court, represented the City of Memphis in specific litigation, and I got the opportunity to try a case in General Sessions Civil Court representing an airline. I also got the unique opportunity to argue an appeal on a premise liability case before the Tennessee Court of Appeals in Jackson.

In September of 2000, I accepted a position with the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office as an assistant district attorney. From October 2000 to November 2003, I handled misdemeanor and major felony cases in General Sessions Criminal Court, Juvenile Court and Criminal Court. My assignments included General Sessions Criminal Court Division 13, the Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit, Criminal Court Division 9, and the Anti-Gang Prosecution Team.

In November 2003, I was presented with the opportunity to work for a big law firm. I accepted a job as an associate attorney with Apperson, Crump, and Maxwell. I was assigned to the civil litigation section. I represented clients in civil cases in the areas of employment law, family law, real estate, corporate law and general litigation. I practiced in Shelby County General Sessions Civil Court, Juvenile Court, Circuit Court, and Chancery court.

In 2004, after a year into my civil practice, District Attorney General William Gibbons offered me the opportunity to be a part of an expanded Gang Unit he created to fight gang crime in Memphis. I accepted. I spent the next 13 years confronting violent gang crime in Memphis. Assigned to the Gang and Narcotics Prosecution Unit, I prosecuted specially assigned violent crimes, homicides and other gang-related cases. I vertically prosecuted cases by handling the cases from the investigative stage through disposition by plea or trial. Through vertical prosecution I handled cases in every division of Shelby County Criminal Court. I was promoted to Chief Supervising Prosecutor of the Unit. I also participated in the creation of the first Multi-Agency Gang Unit. This Unit consisted of both federal and state law enforcement agencies. Through this work, I supervised wiretaps, prosecuted cases from major undercover operations, applied public nuisance law, and handled major cases against targeted street gangs. I supervised five assistant district attorneys, three criminal investigators, a victim/witness coordinator and an administrative assistant. I managed the day-to-day operations of the Unit while carrying a full caseload and tried major felony cases including capital cases.

In 2016, I accepted the opportunity to serve as a magistrate judge in Juvenile Court. From May 2016 to February 2018, I presided over dockets in juvenile court handling delinquency, dependency and neglect, contempt, detention, custody and visitation, foster care, and child support cases. I issued rulings on motions, hearings, and trials. When I presided over trials, I ruled on the admissibility of evidence and objections. I also reviewed and made decisions on Ex Parte Emergency Removal Petitions.

In February 2018, I became the Deputy District Attorney of the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office. In that role, I reported directly to the District Attorney. I managed the day-to-day operations of the Office which included over 100 attorneys and 130 personnel. The supervisors over the criminal courts, general sessions criminal courts, grand jury, criminal investigations division and victim/witness unit reported directly to me. I reviewed and approved all extradition decisions and reviewed first-degree murder cases. I was responsible for submitting parole opposition letters for defendants up for parole in major felony cases. I also interviewed and made recommendations for hiring assistant district attorney applicants. In addition, I prosecuted major cases specifically assigned by the District Attorney. In the absence of the District Attorney General, I assumed the duties and responsibilities of the District Attorney.

In September 2022, District Attorney Steve Mulroy was sworn in as the Shelby County District Attorney General. He asked me to stay on as interim Deputy District Attorney to assist in the transition. Ultimately, he asked me to stay on as his permanent Deputy District Attorney.

In September 2023, after five and half years of service as Shelby County Deputy District Attorney, I retired from the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office and accepted a position with the Tennessee Attorney General's Office as an assistant attorney general. A description of my work is included in #6 above.

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

As a violent crimes prosecutor for over a decade, I handled many complex felony cases to disposition. Before I list a few examples, I want to note I never handled a complex case without a team. Throughout my career, I was blessed with amazing co-counsel, investigators, victim-witness coordinators, support staff, and amazing law enforcement officers who built the cases.

I tried over 60 major felony jury trials in the Shelby County Criminal Courts. Of special note, those cases involved the following charges: Rape of a Child, Aggravated Child Abuse, Aggravated Rape, Aggravated Robbery, Especially Aggravated Robbery, Aggravated Kidnapping, Especially Aggravated Kidnapping, Aggravated Burglary, Especially Aggravated Burglary, Aggravated Arson, Aggravated Assault, Reckless Homicide, Attempted First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, Felony First-Degree Murder, and First-Degree Premeditated Murder. Many of the cases involved multiple defendants. Through my career, I confronted many complex legal issues such as the application of criminal responsibility, corroboration of accomplice testimony, severance-Bruton issues, cooperating co-defendants, 404(B) prior bad acts, witness coercion, hostile witnesses, hybrid guilty pleas, Alford pleas, death qualifying a jury, jury views, and requests for special jury instructions. I conducted transfer hearings to try juveniles as adults for certain violent offenses. I also negotiated hundreds of major felony cases involving dispositions from 25 years to life without parole.

State v. Jessie Dotson: This case has been referred to as the Lester Street Massacre. In 2010, after I had tried 41 felony jury trials including 21 first-degree murder trials, I was assigned as one of the lead prosecutors to one of the biggest mass murder cases in the State of Tennessee at the time. In March 2008, I received a call from homicide detectives with the Memphis Police Department that they located nine victims inside of a home here in Memphis. There were six confirmed dead including two women, two men, and two children. The adult victims were shot. The children were brutally beaten with boards and stabbed with a kitchen knife. The evidence at the scene suggested a gang hit. One of the nine-year-old victims survived 40 hours in a bathtub with a knife in his head. The two other surviving victims were a five-year old and a four-month-old baby. I worked around the clock with homicide detectives reviewing search warrants, looking at the crime scene evidence and meeting with state and federal agencies. Homicide detectives knew that the killer or killers thought everyone in the house was dead. The nine-year old victim was at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in ICU with 24-hour protection, and this information was not released to the public. Law enforcement placed the remaining family members including Jessie Dotson in protective custody. When the nine-year old victim woke up in ICU, he told a homicide detective that "Uncle Junior" did it. Jessie Dotson was Uncle Junior. Jessie Dotson was arrested and later indicted for six counts of first-degree murder and three counts of attempted first-degree murder. Based on numerous aggravated circumstances, we filed Notice to Seek the Death Penalty on the six murdered victims. Aside from the normal complexities of a capital case, we dealt with many issues. Due to the media attention, I had to argue against a change of venue. The trial court granted a change of venue. We selected our jury from Davidson County. I confronted legal issues with Department of Child Services records, child forensic interviews, and litigation surrounding the "First 48" television show. I cross-examined Jessie Dotson and one of the defense experts claiming the forensic interviews of the children were not done properly. This case had over 286 potential witnesses. Crime scene officers ran out of placards due to the number of victims and the amount of evidence inside the house. Forensic testing results continued to come in for months after the indictment. After several weeks in trial, the jury convicted Jessie Dotson as charged. He was sentenced to six death sentences plus 120 years for the attempted murder of the three surviving children. *State v. Dotson*, No. W2011-00815-CCA-R3-CD, 2013 WL 4728679 (Tenn. Crim. App. June 25, 2013).

After the Jessie Dotson capital murder trial, I tried 19 additional major felony cases including 16 first-degree murder cases. I selected the following criminal court cases to provide a few examples of different legal issues I confronted:

State v. Devin Jefferson, Victor Trezevant, and Courtney Washington: This case involved the murder of a University of Memphis football player. The victim had won some money. He was dating Jefferson's girlfriend. Jefferson recruited Trezevant and Washington to rob the victim. Washington agreed to drive Trezevant to the campus. When the victim was in his vehicle leaving campus, Trezevant pulled a gun on him and attempted to rob him. When the victim tried to drive away, Trezevant shot the victim in the chest. The victim crashed into a tree on campus. Initially, the first responders thought it was a car accident until one of the paramedics noticed the gunshot wound to his chest. Jefferson, Trezevant, and Washington were all indicted for one count of murder in the perpetration of an attempted robbery. In this case, we had to make a strategic

decision to allow Washington to cooperate and testify. We also decided to try Trezevant and Jefferson separately based on the statements they gave to law enforcement. Another challenge was convincing the jury to convict Jefferson under the theory of criminal responsibility when he was not present during the attempted robbery and killing. I persuaded the jury to apply felony murder against Jefferson based on the law that a person can be responsible for a murder even if the killing was not contemplated by them as long as they agreed to participate in the underlying felony. I also responded to motions based on the "First 48" television show which alleged that footage of events they filmed during the investigation of the case was destroyed. *State v. Devin Jefferson*, No. W2010-01600-CCA-R3-CD, 2011 WL 5118776 (Tenn. Crim. App. Oct. 27, 2011); *State v. Trezevant*, No. W2011-00818-CCA-R3-CD, 2013 WL 865331 (Tenn. Crim. App. Mar. 5, 2013).

State v. Jermaine Owens: Owens along with two co-defendants abducted a male and female from the parking lot of their Memphis apartment. They put the victims into a car at gunpoint, drove them around, took them to a field where they raped the female victim and shot the male victim. They attempted to use one of the victims' debit cards at an ATM. Both victims survived and testified at trial. Owens was indicted for two counts of especially aggravated kidnapping, two counts of especially aggravated robbery and two counts of aggravated rape. After trial by jury he was convicted as charged on all counts. He received a total effective sentence of 125 years. The other two defendants cooperated and entered guilty pleas. It was very difficult to prepare the victims to testify in this case and face their attackers. *State v. Jermaine Owens*, No. W2012-00054-CCA-R3-CD, 2013 WL 3991822 (Tenn. Crim. App. Aug. 5, 2013).

State v. Dexter Cox: Dexter Cox murdered three people in three separate offenses. In October 2007, Cox approached a couple on their porch and shot and killed the husband and attempted to kill the wife to steal the husband's gun. A Shelby County grand jury indicted Cox for first degree premeditated murder, first degree felony murder, attempted first degree murder, and especially aggravated robbery. We tried Cox for those crimes. The jury returned verdicts of guilty on both counts of first-degree murder, the lesser-included offense of attempted second degree murder, and especially aggravated robbery. He was sentenced to an effective sentence of life without the possibility of parole. In December of 2007, Cox shot and killed a female in the carport of a home for saying something to him that he did not like. A Shelby County grand jury indicted Cox for first degree premeditated murder for that killing. We tried him on that case. He was found guilty of first-degree murder. He was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. The sentence was ordered to be served consecutively to the previously imposed life without parole sentence. In January 2008, Cox murdered an off-duty Memphis Police Lieutenant. Cox was also indicted for that murder. We were able to resolve that case based on the two prior life without parole sentences. There was ballistics evidence that Cox used the same .40 caliber handgun to kill all the three victims. *State v. Dexter Cox*, No. W2011-01429-CCA-R3-CD, 2013 WL 118714 (Tenn. Crim. App. Jan. 9, 2013) (*Dexter Cox I*); *State v. Dexter Cox*, No. W2012-00886-CCA-R3-CD, 2013 WL 5488593 (Tenn. Crim. App. Sep. 30, 2013).

State v. Dondre Johnson: The victim in this case went to downtown Memphis to celebrate his graduation from nursing school. Johnson and his co-defendants were driving around looking for someone to rob. They saw the victim walking to his car. They followed him. Johnson got out of

the car and tried to rob the victim. Johnson shot him in the chest and fled the scene. The victim died. We convinced the female driver to cooperate and testify. Of note, we allowed her to enter a plea after her cooperation where she avoided incarceration. The last report is that she changed her life, has a good job and is a productive citizen. After we tried Johnson, he was convicted of first degree murder in the perpetration of an attempted robbery and was sentenced to life imprisonment. *State v. Dondre Johnson*, No. W2015-02401-CCA-R3-CCA-CD, 2017 WL 937661 (Tenn. Crim. App. Mar. 8, 2017).

State v. Deredious Otis, Brashard Gibbs, and Carlos Key: This was prosecuted as a gang case and involved the consolidation of indictments for trial. These crimes resulted from the burglary of a Memphis gang member's residence where approximately \$100,000 cash and 80 pounds of marijuana was stolen. It was determined that the intended victims were responsible for the thefts and Otis, Key, and Gibbs were enlisted to kill them. The first incident occurred at a carwash as Key circled the carwash in his burgundy-colored vehicle. His passengers were Otis, armed with two handguns with extended clips, and Gibbs, armed with a double-barreled machine gun, who sprayed the carwash with bullets. An innocent victim who was having his car washed and was not involved in the earlier burglary or theft was shot and killed. The intended targets were at the carwash. One was shot in the buttocks, and the other two were not injured. The second incident occurred on a Memphis interstate. One of the intended victims was driving with his cousin and her boyfriend, when Key pulled up beside them. Otis and Gibbs leaned out of the car and opened fire on the intended victim's vehicle, riddling it with bullet holes. He survived and decided to cooperate with the police regarding the carwash shooting because he believed they would continue to try and kill him. We made the decision to consolidate the indictments and try Otis, Key, and Gibbs together. After trial, Otis and Key were convicted of one count of first-degree premeditated murder and two counts of attempted first degree murder, and Gibbs was convicted of one count of first-degree premeditated murder, five counts of attempted first degree murder, and three counts of employing a firearm during the commission of a dangerous felony. Otis and Key were each sentenced to life for their first-degree murder conviction and twenty-five years for each of their attempted first-degree murder convictions, with all sentences to be served consecutively. Gibbs was sentenced to life for the first-degree murder conviction, twenty-five years for each of the five counts of attempted first degree murder, and six years for each of the three counts of employing a firearm during the commission of a dangerous felony, with all sentences to be served consecutively. This case is an example of many gang cases where I made the decision to try all the defendants together. This case presented many legal challenges. We requested and were granted a jury view where the jury got to see the actual scene of the crime. In this case, we dealt with gang issues, death threats, attempts to frighten witnesses, and all the issues that come with trying three defendants at once. *State v. Otis, Gibbs, and Key*, No. W2016-01261-CCA-CCA-R3-CD, 2018 WL 931131 (Tenn. Crim. App. Feb. 15, 2018.)

For almost two years now, as an assistant attorney general, I have been handling criminal cases on appeal from trial courts across the State of Tennessee. This has been a unique opportunity as a former trial lawyer. After filing numerous appellate briefs and conducting a few oral arguments, I would like to make a special note of one case I argued in the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals in Nashville. A Maury County jury convicted Faulk, of aggravated vehicular homicide, and he was subsequently sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. In his direct appeal, Faulk argued the trial court erred in allowing two Tennessee State Troopers who were certified as experts in accident reconstruction to testify as experts in occupant kinetics. Faulk's

conviction stemmed from a multi-vehicle head-on collision in which he was one of two occupants in a vehicle driving in the wrong lane against oncoming traffic. The other occupant was ejected from the vehicle and died. The primary issue in dispute at trial was the identity of the driver. There was not a lot of case law on occupant kinetics. After I defended the trial court's decision to admit the expert testimony, the CCA affirmed the judgment of the trial court. *State v. Faulk*, No. M2023-01218-CCA-R3-Cd, 2025 WL 429929 (Tenn. Crim. App. Feb. 7, 2025).

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

Separately, I would like to bring to the Commission's attention the experience I gained as a Magistrate Judge in Juvenile Court. One of the most difficult dockets I presided over was the dependency and neglect docket. I handled a high volume of cases involving allegations of child abuse and neglect. During that time, I had to make difficult decisions regarding the placement or removal of a child from a home when often times there were no good options. For two years, I presided over trials involving the Department of Children Services, Guardian Ad Litem, and children in horrible situations. Through this experience, I learned a lot about myself and my ability to be a judge. I left the bench knowing I had the right judicial temperament, willingness to learn and apply the law, make hard decisions, treat everyone in my courtroom with fairness and respect, and maintain professionalism and order in the court.

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

This is my first application for a judicial position.

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.

Salisbury State University-Salisbury, Maryland, 1988-89. I completed my freshman year with honors. I moved back home to Georgia for financial reasons.

Kennesaw State University – Kennesaw, Georgia. Bachelor of Science, Political Science, 1993-1996. I graduated Cum Laude.

University of Memphis, Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law – Memphis, Tennessee, 1996-1999. Juris Doctor. I graduated top 25% of my class.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

January 3, [REDACTED]

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

I have continuously lived in Tennessee for 29 years.

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

I have continuously lived in Shelby County for 29 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.

I have never served in the military. At 18, I enlisted in the Air Force but did not complete basic training. I received an entry level separation.

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.

In my 20s, in 1989 or 1990, I pled guilty to a misdemeanor disorderly conduct charge in Dekalb County Georgia and paid a fine. In November 1991, I had a driving under the influence charge in Gwinnett County, Georgia. I entered a nolo contendere plea.

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.

I am not aware of any formal complaints filed against me alleging a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct. According to the Tennessee Board of Professional of Responsibility, since I was licensed in Tennessee to practice law and sworn in on November 17, 1999, no investigative file has ever been opened on me.

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.

When my wife and I married in June 2015, we began filing joint returns. She had accounts from her previous marriage. We were notified by the IRS this past year that in 2017 and 2019 there were discrepancies between the 1099s my wife's accountant filed and 1099s submitted by third parties. We hired a tax attorney to address the matter. Our attorney is working with the IRS to resolve the matter. Any money owed will be paid. My current returns are filed, and all my current taxes have been paid.

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.

Lorraine Pamela Lepone (Plaintiff) v. Raymond John Lepone (Defendant). Shelby County

Chancery Court case number CH-02-2004. The divorce was granted based on irreconcilable differences on August 31, 2006.

Raymond John Lepone (Plaintiff) v. Tonya Lane Lepone (Defendant). Tipton County Chancery Court case number 30933. The divorce was granted based on irreconcilable differences on January 13, 2014.

As Deputy District Attorney in 2020, I was sued in my official capacity by a former employee. Pamela Stark (Plaintiff) v. City of Memphis, et. al. (Defendants). United States District Court case number 2:19-cv-02396-JTF-tmp. There were numerous parties sued. I was ultimately dismissed from the case.

*When I served as Deputy District Attorney, it was common for defendants to list me as a defendant in lawsuits filed against the District Attorney. I am not aware of any claims against me that survived a motion to dismiss.

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.

I am currently a member of the United States Boxing Association. I am a licensed Green Level amateur boxing coach.

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.

Association of Prosecuting Attorneys Capital Litigation Advisory Committee 2018-2023; Appointed to the Governor's Juvenile Justice Reform Implementation Council, 2019; Leo Bearman Sr. American Inn of Court 2017-2020; Board Member of the Center for Excellence in Decision-Making 2018-2023; Current Memphis Bar Foundation Fellow; Current member of the Memphis Bar Association; Current Board Member of the Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation.

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.

Nominee for the Criminal Justice Professional of the Year, 2009.

Recognized by the Memphis Police Department's Organized Crime Unit for my work in the undercover operation Blue Star, 2009.

Shelby County District Attorney General's Office Distinguished Service Award, 2011.

I received a Unit Citation Award from the Memphis Police Department for my work in the Multi-Agency Gang Unit, 2015.

I was the Cease Fire Program Volunteer of the Year, 2019.

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

Not applicable.

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

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

Through my 26 years as a licensed attorney in Tennessee, I have been blessed to serve the public as an assistant district attorney, magistrate judge, and assistant attorney general. I was overwhelmed by the number of defense attorneys, prosecutors, court staff, law enforcement, sitting Judges, and citizens here in Shelby County who reached out to me when Judge Skahan announced her retirement. They asked me to consider applying for this judicial appointment. I believe becoming the next criminal court judge in Division I will be my next call to service. I am not only ready, but I believe my years of handling criminal cases from misdemeanors to capital murders as an assistant district attorney and deputy district attorney, presiding over cases

as a magistrate, and handling appeals as an assistant attorney general will bring needed experience to the Shelby County Criminal Court bench.

29. Describe the judgeship you seek (i.e. geographic area, types of cases, number of judges, etc. and explain how your selection would impact the court. *(150 words or less)*

I seek the criminal court trial judgeship for Shelby County Criminal Court Division I. Shelby County recently lost a criminal court division. Now, there are nine divisions of criminal court with a high volume of cases and defendants sitting in jail. All the judges are working hard to handle a high volume of all types of criminal cases from theft to rape, robbery, and murder. I spent many years handling major cases in all the divisions of Shelby County Criminal Court. I will be able to take the bench and immediately handle the docket, hearings, and trials including major felonies and capital cases.

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 it. I worked hard to set aside my personal opinions when I served as an assistant district attorney, magistrate judge, and as an assistant attorney general. As an assistant district attorney, I conceded the suppression of a defendant's confession in a murder case because law enforcement's explanation of the probable cause to arrest the defendant was not sufficient. As a magistrate judge, I removed a child from a home where the child was prospering and placed the child in the home the law dictated. As an assistant attorney general, I conceded that the trial erred in revoking the probation of a violent offender because it did not create a record to support its decision.

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. Jennifer Nichols, Circuit Court Judge in the 18th Judicial District for Sumner County, [REDACTED]

B. Valerie Smith, Tennessee Court of Appeals Judge, [REDACTED]

C. Charles Mitchell, attorney with Black, McLaren, Jones, Ryland and Griffee, PC, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
D. Mike Shearin, Inmate Disciplinary Oversight Board, [REDACTED]

E. Barbara Trautman, President of Republican Women of Purpose, [REDACTED]

AFFIRMATION CONCERNING APPLICATION

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

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

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

Dated: June 11, 2025.



Signature

When completed, return this questionnaire to John Jefferson at the Administrative Office of the Courts, 511 Union Street, Suite 600, Nashville, TN 37219.



**TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT VACANCY COMMISSION
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**

511 UNION STREET, SUITE 600
NASHVILLE CITY CENTER
NASHVILLE, TN 37219

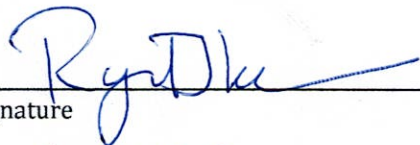
**TENNESSEE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
TENNESSEE BOARD OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT
AND OTHER LICENSING BOARDS**

WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY

I hereby waive the privilege of confidentiality with respect to any information that concerns me, including public discipline, private discipline, deferred discipline agreements, diversions, dismissed complaints and any complaints erased by law, and is known to, recorded with, on file with the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of Tennessee, the Tennessee Board of Judicial Conduct (previously known as the Court of the Judiciary) and any other licensing board, whether within or outside the State of Tennessee, from which I have been issued a license that is currently active, inactive or other status. I hereby authorize a representative of the Trial Court Vacancy Commission to request and receive any such information and distribute it to the membership of the Commission and to the Office of the Governor.

Raymond J. Lepone

Type or Print Name



Signature

6-11-25

Date

020176

BPR #

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

Tennessee Athletic Commission, Boxing Participant
license, License number 5294.