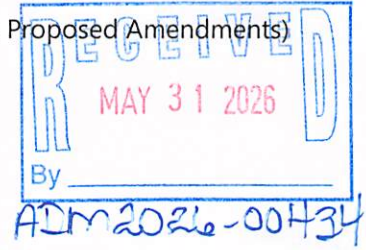


**MaryBeth Lindsey**

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**To:** appellatecourtclerk  
**Subject:** RE: Public Comment – ADM2026-00434 (Rule 50A Proposed Amendments)



**From:** Peter Maher <pfwm1973@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 31, 2026 8:37 AM  
**To:** appellatecourtclerk <appellatecourtclerk@tncourts.gov>  
**Subject:** Public Comment – ADM2026-00434 (Rule 50A Proposed Amendments)

**Warning: Unusual sender** <pfwm1973@outlook.com>

You don't usually receive emails from this address. Make sure you trust this sender before taking any actions.

Dear Clerk,

Please accept the attached public comment regarding the proposed amendments to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 50A, Docket No. ADM2026-00434.

I understand that the deadline for submission is June 30, 2026, and I respectfully submit this comment for the Court's consideration within the comment period.

Attached is my written public comment.

I would appreciate confirmation of receipt at your convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Peter Maher

5801 State Hwy 54 N

Belle Eagle, Tennessee 38012

Peter Maher  
5801 State Hwy 54 North  
Belle Eagle, Tennessee 38012

May 31, 2026

James Hivner, Clerk  
Tennessee Supreme Court  
401 Seventh Avenue North, Suite 321  
Nashville, TN 37219

Re: Public Comment on Proposed Amendments to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 50A  
Docket No. ADM2026-00434

Dear Clerk and Members of the Court:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit public comment on the proposed amendments to Rule 50A governing Tennessee's Pro Bono Emeritus Attorney Program.

I write to incorporate and reiterate concerns previously submitted to the Tennessee Access to Justice Commission on December 7, 2025, regarding systemic gaps in access to legal representation for Tennesseans who do not qualify for legal aid but are unable to afford market-rate counsel.

As described in that submission, my own efforts to retain counsel for a public interest matter resulted in identifying only two attorneys in West Tennessee willing to engage, both at rates between \$350 and \$500 per hour. This experience highlights a significant access-to-justice gap for individuals of moderate means.

While Rule 50A and the proposed amendments seek to expand pro bono capacity for those who qualify for free legal services, they do not address a broader and equally important issue: Tennesseans pursuing public interest matters—particularly those involving First Amendment rights, government transparency, or civil accountability—often have no practical pathway to obtain representation at any price point short of full-market rates.

In addition, research reflects that no bar association in Tennessee currently provides a functional referral program identifying attorneys available to handle basic First Amendment or public interest matters, nor do such organizations maintain accessible directories of attorneys willing to accept these types of cases. As a result, individuals seeking to pursue matters involving constitutional rights are often left without guidance, referrals, or meaningful access to representation.

This lack of referral infrastructure compounds the affordability gap described above. Even where individuals are willing to pay reduced or reasonable fees, there is no transparent or centralized mechanism to locate attorneys willing to accept such matters.

Accordingly, I respectfully encourage the Court to consider whether Rule 50A—or related policy initiatives—could be expanded to address these structural deficiencies. Potential considerations include:

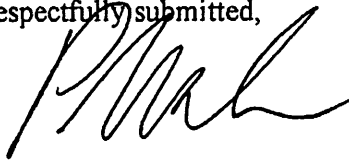
1. Encouraging or permitting structured low bono representation for public interest matters, including through emeritus or affiliated attorneys;
2. Supporting the development of transparent referral systems or directories for public interest and First Amendment representation;
3. Recognizing that access to justice includes not only indigent individuals, but also those of moderate means who seek to advance matters of public concern;
4. Exploring whether Emeritus Attorneys could play a role in closing this gap beyond traditional legal aid frameworks.

The proposed amendments to Rule 50A improve clarity and may increase participation, which is commendable. However, absent broader reforms addressing affordability and referral access, a substantial segment of Tennesseans will remain effectively excluded from meaningful access to legal representation in matters affecting public rights and accountability.

I am grateful for the Court's leadership on these issues and would be glad to assist the Court, its working groups, or any Tennessee stakeholders who may find my experience helpful as the Court considers the appropriate path forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Maher', written over the typed name below.

Peter Maher