

Tennessee Trial Court Vacancy Commission
Application for Nomination to Judicial Office


1/17/23


Name: Jeremy Douglas Churchwell

Office Address: 706 Justice Center Drive
(including county) P.O. Box 1760
Dandridge, Jefferson County, TN 37725

Office Phone: (865) 397-3939 Facsimile: (865) 397-3132

Email Address: jchurchwell@rainwaterlaw.net

Home Address: 
(including county)

Home Phone: (Not Applicable) Cellular 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.

Attorney at law, Rainwater, Drinnon & Churchwell, PLLC

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

2011, Board of Professional Responsibility number 029772

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, Board of Professional Responsibility number 029772

April 19, 2011. My 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).

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).

Following my graduation from the Nashville School of Law in 2010, I returned to Jefferson County and began practicing law at Rainwater, Drinnon & Churchwell, PLLC in Dandridge, Tennessee where I continue to practice today. Rainwater, Drinnon & Churchwell, PLLC is successor to Rainwater & Rainwater, established and founded by the late Chester S. Rainwater, Sr. in 1933. I have been practicing at this firm with my brother, Larry R. Churchwell, II and S. Douglas Drinnon since becoming licensed in April 2011.

While living in Nashville, I worked full time and attended law school in the evenings. I was employed as a law clerk/court officer for the Fourth Circuit Court for Davidson County,

Tennessee from March 2008 – September 2009. I clerked for the Hon. Murial Robinson from March 2008 until March 2009 when she retired. Following the Governor’s appointment of the late Hon. Phillip E. Smith, I continued in that clerkship for Judge Smith until September 2009. I was able to participate in and observe multiple bench trials and weekly motion hearings during those clerkships and observe those matters from the perspectives of the litigants, attorneys as well as the Court. I gained invaluable experience during my time there.

Prior to working for the Fourth Circuit Court, I was employed as an administrative assistant with the Comptroller of Treasury, State Board of Equalization in Nashville from March 2008 – March 2009. There, I assisted in reviewing statewide economic development contracts between local Industrial Development Boards and private entities and uploaded annual reporting data into a tracking database.

I worked for the Jefferson County Zoning Office from July 2004 – December 2006 as an Assistant Zoning Compliance Officer before moving to Nashville to attend law school. In that position, I worked with the public regarding the Jefferson County zoning resolution and subdivision development regulations. I assisted in reviewing subdivision plats, issued and maintained building permits, participated in regular monthly planning and county commission meetings and maintained monthly and quarterly financial reports for the office. I attended classes during the evenings and obtained my bachelor’s degree from Tusculum University in December 2006 at the same time.

Immediately prior to that, I was employed as a Deputy Assessor with the Jefferson County Property Assessor’s Office from July 2003 – July 2004 where I participated in the reappraisal of property valuation for Jefferson County, Tennessee. I conducted field reviews and measured new construction for tax records. I also assisted in performing sales analysis and determining values for residential and commercial properties and improvements and worked with taxpayers on a regular basis regarding property records and appraisal information. During this time, I also obtained a Tennessee Real Estate License in 2003 but did not end up pursuing that profession. I maintained that license in a retired status until I decided to attend law school and ultimately allowed it to expire.

From the time I graduated high school in 2000 through 2003, I worked in a manufacturing plant, Challenger, Inc. in Dandridge, Tennessee, while attending classes at Walters State Community College where I obtained my associates degree in 2003. While attending high school, I worked at Food City in White Pine, Tennessee in the evenings. I also worked for Joe Samples Well Drilling, Inc. during the summers and school breaks, and there was at least one summer that I worked for a local marina as well.

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 would estimate approximately 35% of my current practice consists of domestic and family law matters, such as divorce, post-divorce, orders of protection, paternity, child support, grandparent visitation, conservatorship, and dependency and neglect issues. I would attribute another 35% of my current practice to general civil litigation. Approximately 20% of my practice consists of criminal defense work, and 10% to business and transactional matters, and probate and estate matters.

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.

My experience consists of a diverse general practice ranging from business and transactional matters to litigation on behalf of entities and individuals in civil and criminal matters before the Circuit, Chancery, General Sessions, Juvenile and Probate Courts throughout East Tennessee, but primarily within the Fourth Judicial District. I have represented hundreds of clients in a range of legal matters over the last thirteen years, but my primary practice areas of litigation have included family law and related matters, orders of protection, juvenile dependency and neglect, grandparent visitation, real estate and land use disputes, landlord/tenant issues, criminal defense, probate and estate, guardianship/conservatorship, personal injury and general civil litigation.

Early in my career, I represented many indigent clients through court appointment, charged with misdemeanor and felony criminal offenses in the General Sessions and/or Circuit Court, as well as many others facing the loss of custody of their children through Juvenile Court proceedings. I represented several others by appointment against criminal and/or civil contempt actions brought against them in the Circuit and Chancery Courts. I have served as Guardian Ad Litem for multiple children in various Juvenile Court actions, as well as minors in Guardianship matters and alleged disabled individuals in Conservatorship matters during my practice.

Over the years of my practice, I have represented clients in bench trials before each of the four Circuit Court Judges in the 4th Judicial District, as well as before the Chancery Court. I have represented numerous other clients in hearings before the General Sessions and Juvenile Courts throughout the 4th Judicial District and have participated in countless mediations achieving settlements for clients over the course of my practice.

I have prepared, briefed and argued before the Tennessee Court of Appeals. I have also been engaged by other members of the local bar to assist in the preparation of legal memorandums and appellant briefs, as well as to prepare numerous Qualified Domestic Relations Orders relative to the division of retirement plans in divorce actions over the years. I am currently representing two clients in matters before the Department of Children's Services Due Process Procedures appellant process. I have also represented clients regarding matters before the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security regarding drivers license reinstatement

and vehicle seizure.

Additionally, Rainwater, Drinnon & Churchwell, PLLC serves as general counsel for Jefferson County, Tennessee, the City of New Market, Tennessee, the Town of Bean Station, Tennessee, the Town of White Pine, Tennessee, and the City of Baneberry, Tennessee. The firm further serves as general counsel for Appalachian Electric Cooperative, Witt Utility District, Shady Grove Utility District and Tiger Haven, Inc. My experience includes assisting in the representation of those governmental entities and municipalities over the years of my practice. I have attended multiple city council meetings and county planning commission/board of zoning appeals meetings as counsel. I have represented Jefferson County in lawsuits before the Circuit Court relative to zoning and land use violations and have dealt with various department heads regarding legal issues throughout my practice. I also routinely represent clients in business and transactional matters as well as estate planning issues, and the preparation of contracts, leases, liens, deeds and prenuptial agreements.

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.

During my legal practice here in rural East Tennessee, our office regularly encounters clients from all walks of life, ranging from the very wealthy to others who have very limited financial means. Throughout the course of my practice, I have made it a priority to help clients who might not otherwise be able to afford legal assistance. In so doing, I have contributed time and done a considerable amount of legal work for clients with limited resources either pro bono or at significantly reduced rates.

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

This is the first application I have ever submitted for any 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.

Nashville School of Law, 02/2007-12/2010
Doctor of Jurisprudence, 2010 (Class Standing 6 out of 52)

Tusculum University, 02/2005-12/2006
Bachelor of Science, Business/Organizational Management, 2006

Walters State Community College, 2001-2003
Associates of Science, General Studies, 2003

PERSONAL INFORMATION

12. State your date of birth.

[REDACTED]

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

I have lived continuously in the State of Tennessee since birth (42 years).

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

I have continuously lived in Jefferson County, Tennessee since January 2011. With the exception of living in Davidson County, Tennessee from 2007-2010 while attending law school, I have lived in Jefferson County since birth.

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

Jefferson 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.

During my thirteen years of practicing law, I have responded to two complaints from the Board of Professional Responsibility. Both complaints were filed by former domestic relations clients. One was filed in 2014 and the other was filed in early 2022, well over a year following the entry of an Order permitting my withdrawal in the matter. Both complaints were dismissed following my response and investigation by the Board of Professional Responsibility.

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.

Yes, I participated in a legal proceeding filed on December 19, 2019 styled: *Katheryn Lamb v. Jeremy Churchwell*; Jefferson County Circuit Court, No. 26210-I. This was a civil action filed against me regarding an automobile accident I was involved in on December 28, 2018 in Jefferson County, Tennessee. Liability and damages were contested from the outset. My insurance company and assigned defense counsel elected to file a counter-complaint against the Plaintiff for damages relative to the loss of my vehicle. Following the presiding judge's recusal and the reassignment to a new judge, the matter was scheduled for trial by jury to occur on February 15, 2023. Approximately three weeks prior to the scheduled trial date, the matter was voluntarily dismissed with prejudice.

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.

My wife of sixteen years, Trish, and our four children attend Arrowhead Church in Morristown, Tennessee. I contribute annually to the Boys and Girls Club, Jefferson County Habitat for Humanity, Jefferson County Shoe Program through the Shriners, and Lakeway Area FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes).

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.

Tennessee Bar Association, Member 2024
Jefferson County Bar Association, Member 2011-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.

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.

None.

ESSAYS/PERSONAL STATEMENTS

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

I am seeking this position because I enjoy working with the public and know that I have the intellectual and professional ability, integrity, work ethic and temperament to faithfully fulfill the duties of the position in an impartial manner. I was born and raised in Jefferson County and am raising my own four children here with no intention of ever leaving. I have been blessed by the support and trust of many residents in the Fourth Judicial District throughout my career and have a deep sense of duty to my community and commitment to justice. If selected, I will ensure that all litigants coming before the court receive a fair shake and equal unbiased access to justice under the law.

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

I am seeking appointment to the new judicial position of Fourth Judicial District Circuit Judge, Part V as created by Public Chapter No. 977. The Fourth Judicial District includes Cocke, Grainger, Jefferson and Sevier Counties and has historically been served by one Chancellor and four Circuit Court Judges prior to the creation of this position. Our Circuit Judges hear non-jury and jury civil and criminal causes of action, including appeals from General Sessions and Juvenile actions. It is my understanding that the presiding Circuit Court Judges in the Fourth Judicial District have entered an Order designating this new position to hear civil matters only. I believe I am equipped with the experience and abilities to transition into this position smoothly. If selected, I will ensure that all parties before the court receive equal and impartial access to justice and are treated with respect and dignity.

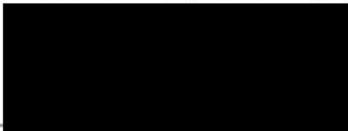
30. Will you uphold the law even if you disagree with the substance of the law (e.g., statute or rule) at issue? Give an example from your experience as a licensed attorney that supports your response to this question. (250 words or less)

Yes, I will uphold the law. The role of a Circuit Judge is to hear the facts and apply the law as written and intended by the General Assembly with guidance by interpretations set forth by the Appellant Courts. I imagine most litigators have faced scenarios during their practice where they have represented a client pursuant to the law even though it did not conform to their personal beliefs or sense of justice. I personally disagree that individuals who have been wronged in property tort actions are unable to recover their legal expenses. For example, I have had many clients who have sustained damages relative to real or personal property where the liability of the tortfeasor is clear. Sure, they can file a lawsuit and recover for their proven compensatory damages, but they cannot be made whole under the law. Those individuals, through no fault of their own, are forced to incur attorney's fees and expenses to litigate their claim but are unable to recover those expenses under the law, resulting in additional financial loss to them. This is particularly difficult in situations where indigent individuals lack financial resources to engage counsel to pursue their claims, which results in compromised or abandoned claims when liability is clear. Despite my personal disagreement in this regard, if selected, I would certainly uphold and enforce the provisions of the law as written.

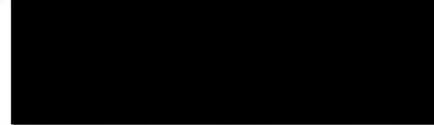
REFERENCES

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. Hon. Timothy E. Irwin, Juvenile Judge for Knox County, TN



B. Hon. O. Duane Slone, Circuit Court Judge, 4th Judicial District, Part IV



C. Dale C. Allen, Attorney (Retired)
Wolfe, McClane, Bright, Allen & Carpenter, PLLC
P.O. Box 299
White Pine, TN 37890



D. Kevin Poe, Circuit Court Clerk for Jefferson County, TN



[REDACTED]

E. Dr. Kevin Cline, Superintendent – Lakeway Christian Schools

[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 Fourth Judicial District Circuit Court, Part V 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: 6/9, 2024.



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.

Jeremy D. Churchwell

Type or Print Name

[Handwritten Signature]

Signature

6/9/2024

Date

BPR #029772

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

Not applicable.

