

**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE SUPREME COURT**

The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland,

Petitioner,

v.

Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD); Leon Howard, in his official capacity as Chairman of RCLD; Beth E. Bernstein, in her official capacity as Vice Chair of the RCLD; John L. Scott, Jr. in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Richard A. "Dick" Harpootlian in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Darrell Jackson in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Mia S. McLeod in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; J. Thomas McElveen, III in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Annie E. McDaniel in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; Jermaine Johnson, Sr. in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Nathan Ballentine in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Seth C. Rose in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Christopher R. Hart in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; J. Todd Rutherford in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Heather Bauer in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; Kambrell H. Garvin in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Ivory T. Thigpen in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Richland County; and the Judicial Merit Selection Commission,

Respondents.

**VERIFIED PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AND
REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED CONSIDERATION**

INTRODUCTION

“Our legal system is based on the principle that an independent, fair and competent judiciary will interpret and apply the laws that govern us. The role of the judiciary is central to American concepts of justice and the rule of law. Nothing is more important in a free society than the independence of judges.” Rule 501, SCRAP, Preamble to the Code of Judicial Conduct. This case presents a pressing question about the independence of the

judiciary from the legislative branch of government. At bottom, the Richland County Legislative Delegation is playing fast and loose with its statutory mandate to facilitate the appointment of the Richland County Master-in-Equity. This Court cannot permit legislative machinations to disrupt the ability of the office of the Richland County Master-in-Equity to serve the people of Richland County.

Based upon the information set forth below, Petitioner The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland (“Judge Strickland”) petitions this Court for the following expedited relief:

- (1) a Writ of Mandamus directing Respondents the Richland County Legislative Delegation and its members identified in the caption above (collectively, “RCLD”) to submit Judge Strickland to the Governor for consideration for appointment as Master-In-Equity for Richland County;
- (2) an injunction directing Respondent Judicial Merit Selection Commission (JMSC) to withdraw its posting of a vacancy for and to halt the acceptance or processing of any applications for the office of Richland County Master-in-Equity; and
- (3) any further relief necessary for the implementation of such mandamus and injunction.

In accordance with Rule 65(f)(1), SCRCP, Petitioner submits this Verified Petition.

PARTIES

Respondent Richland County Legislative Delegation is an entity created by the 1975 passage of Act Number 283, SC. Acts and Joint Resolutions, which mandated the creation of County-funded delegation offices to provide administrative support in each of

the state's 46 counties. Respondent Richland County is a political subdivision of the State of South Carolina.

The members of the Richland County Legislative Delegation are Leon Howard, Beth E. Bernstein, John L. Scott, Jr., Richard A. "Dick" Harpootlian, Darrell Jackson, Mia S. McLeod, J. Thomas McElveen, III, Annie E. McDaniel, Jermaine Johnson, Sr., Nathan Ballentine, Seth C. Rose, Christopher R. Hart, J. Todd Rutherford, Heather Bauer, Kambrell H. Garvin, and Ivory T. Thigpen, each of whom is named as a Respondent in this Petition in their official capacities as members of the Richland County Legislative Delegation. The Richland County Legislative Delegation and its members will be referred collectively in this Petition as "RCLD."

Leon Howard is the Chair of the RCLD. However, the office of Chairman is ceremonial and pro forma; the Chairman "(a) cannot take any action on behalf of the delegation save for calling a meeting to order and certain other procedural matters, (b) cannot independently exercise any of the substantive functions of the delegation except by virtue of their roles as voting members, and (c) are not accorded greater weight when voting by virtue of their positions as delegation officers." *Mitchell v. Spartanburg Cty. Legislative Delegation*, 385 S.C. 621, 625, 685 S.E.2d 812, 814 (2009).

Respondent Judicial Merit Selection Commission (JMSC) is a body created and existing within the government of South Carolina. S.C. Const. Ann. Art. V, § 27.

JURISDICTION

It is appropriate for this Court to decide this matter in its original jurisdiction. Pursuant to Rule 245, SCRAP, this Court may assume jurisdiction when "the public interest is involved, or if special grounds of emergency or other good reasons exist why

the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court should be exercised...” See *also* S.C. Const. Art. V § 5. Also pursuant to Rule 245, SCRAP, this Court has jurisdiction to issue extraordinary writs, such as mandamus and injunction, when requested by a petition filed and served upon all parties.

This matter involves a significant public interest. The RCLD’s allegation that a vacancy currently exists in the office of Richland County Master-In-Equity calls into question the validity hundreds of rulings Judge Strickland has issued since the end of his last term on April 30, 2021 until present. The intentional violation of South Carolina’s Code of Laws by the RCLD also poses a danger to the important principle of judicial independence.

There is further a need for prompt consideration of this matter such that an expedited briefing schedule and ruling is appropriate. Most importantly, Respondent JMSC is currently accepting applications for the position of Richland Master-in-Equity and will close the application window on August 4, 2023. A ruling is needed prior to that time so that the JMSC does not move forward with the work of screening candidates, scheduling hearings, and soliciting input from the public for a judicial position that is not available for application.

The facts of this case are undisputed and there is no necessity for discovery. An expedited ruling serves both judicial economy and the public interest in resolving an important issue.

APPOINTMENT OF MASTERS-IN-EQUITY

Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 4-11-10, in counties with a population of more than 130,000, there is established a master-in-equity court. When there is a vacancy in the

office of master-in-equity, the Governor appoints a person to that office with the advice and consent of the General Assembly for a term of six years and until their successor is qualified and appointed. S.C. Code Ann. § 4-11-20. When the term of a master-in-equity expires, a vacancy in the office of master-in-equity occurs. S.C. Code Ann. § 2-19-110.

Upon a vacancy in the office of master-in-equity, the JMSC shall accept applications for the office of master-in-equity. S.C. Code Ann. § 2-19-110. The Judicial Merit Selection Committee then screens the judicial candidates and submits its report and recommendations on master-in-equity candidates to the county legislative delegation. S.C. Code Ann. § 2-19-110. “The county legislative delegation **shall** then submit the name of a candidate to the Governor for consideration for appointment.” S.C. Code Ann. § 2-19-110 (emphasis added).

JUDGE STRICKLAND’S APPOINTMENT AS RICHLAND COUNTY MASTER-IN-EQUITY

Judge Strickland was first appointed to serve as master-in-equity of Richland County in 1989 and has served as master-in-equity without interruption since that time, for 34 years. The JMSC has screened Judge Strickland five times for the position of master-in-equity, and each time it has found Judge Strickland to be qualified for the office of master-in-equity of Richland County.

Figure A shows the history of Judge Strickland’s screening by the JMSC, the start date for each of his terms, and the end date for each of his terms. Figure A is excerpted from a spreadsheet maintained by the JSMC, which can be accessed at the following web address:

<https://www.scstatehouse.gov/JudicialMeritPage/TermsOfJudgesandJudicialInformation.php>

| | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| | Richland County | Birth Year | | |
| Name | Joseph M. Strickland | 1955 | | |
| Address | P.O. Box 192 Columbia, SC 29202 | | | |
| County | Richland County | | | |
| Phone | (803) 576-1900 | | | |
| Fax | (803) 576-1865 | | | |
| | Start Date | End Date | Appointed by the Governor | Screened |
| | 04/30/91 | | | |
| | 04/09/92 | 04/30/97 | 1989 | |
| | 05/01/97 | 04/30/03 | | 01/06/98 |
| | 05/01/03 | 04/30/09 | | 12/03/02* |
| | 05/01/09 | 04/30/15 | | 12/02/08 |
| | 05/01/15 | 04/30/21 | | 11/06/14 |
| | 05/01/21 | 04/30/27 | | 11/30/20 |

Fig. A. History of Judge Strickland's appointment.

Judge Strickland's previous term ended on April 30, 2021. Prior to the end of his previous term and as permitted by state law, the JMSC accepted applications for the office of master-in-equity for Richland County and conducted the statutorily required screening. On January 19, 2021, the JMSC issued its final "Report of Candidate Qualifications: Richland County Master-in-Equity" to the RCLD. In that report, the JMSC found that Judge Strickland was qualified for re-appointment. A copy of that report is attached as **Exhibit 1**.

Figure B is an excerpt of the JMSC's comments and conclusions in that Report, stating that Judge Strickland has an "outstanding reputation" and "great intellect."

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| <p>(11) <u>Commission Members' Comments:</u> The Commission commented that Judge Strickland has an outstanding reputation. They noted his great intellect, which has ably served him in discharging his responsibilities as a Master-in-Equity.</p> <p>(12) <u>Conclusion:</u> The Commission found Judge Strickland qualified for re-appointment as Master-in-Equity for Richland County.</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Fig. B. Excerpt from JMSC Report.

In 2020, Judge Strickland was the only candidate that the JMSC screened for the position, and he is the only candidate that was reported out as qualified by the JMSC in January 2021. Because the JMSC reported out only one candidate and found him qualified, the RCLD was mandated to submit Judge Strickland's name to the Governor for re-appointment to the office of Master-in-Equity. As demonstrated by Fig. 1, the JMSC has recognized that Judge Strickland was reappointed and that his term would end in 2027. Nevertheless, in violation of their statutory mandate, the RCLD did not submit Judge Strickland's name to the Governor for reappointment.

The obvious question is why would the RCLD fail in its statutory duty? Was this intentional or an oversight? The only conceivable answer to this question is the existence of personal animosity felt by Respondent John Scott, Jr. toward Judge Strickland. The basis for this animosity centers on John Scott's son, who was employed in Judge Strickland's chambers. Law enforcement discovered that the son had stolen property throughout the Richland County Courthouse. When Judge Strickland learned of this pattern from the Richland County Sheriff's Department, the son was allowed to resign in lieu of termination. Upon information and belief, it is this circumstance that prompted John Scott to influence the RCLD to withhold Judge Strickland's name from submission to the Governor.

Judge Strickland has continued to serve as master-in-equity for Richland since the end of his previous term on April 30, 2021. Just recently—and more than two years later—on June 28, 2023, the RCLD sent a letter to the JMSC intended to service as “notice of occurred vacancy” in the office of master-in-equity. **Ex. 2**, Letter, dated June 28, 2023, from RCLD Chair Leon Howard to Erin Crawford, Chief Counsel for the JMSC.

Importantly, this letter was signed only by RCLD Chair Leon Howard. There is no indication that there was a meeting of the RCLD to consider this “occurred vacancy” nor is there any indication that there was a vote of the RCLD to direct the JMSC to begin accepting applications for the position. The RCLD maintains a webpage of its meeting agendas.¹ A review of these agendas shows that there has been no meeting of the RCLD to consider the existence of any purported “occurred vacancy” and there was no vote authorizing Leon Howard to send his letter to the JMSC.

MANDAMUS TO RICHLAND COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

The Supreme Court has the power to issue writs of mandamus. S.C. Const. art. V, § 5; S.C. Code Ann. § 14-3-310. Mandamus is the highest judicial writ known to the law. *Brackenbrook N. Charleston, LP v. County of Charleston*, 360 S.C. 390, 400, 602 S.E.2d 39, 45 (2004). It is a coercive writ which orders a public official to perform a ministerial duty. *Wilson v. Preston*, 378 S.C. 348, 354, 662 S.E.2d 580, 582 (2008); *Ex Parte Littlefield*, 343 S.C. 212, 222, 540 S.E.2d 81, 86 (2000).

For a writ of mandamus to issue, the following must be shown: (1) a duty of the respondent to perform the act; (2) the ministerial nature of the act; (3) the petitioner's specific legal right for which discharge of the duty is necessary; and (4) a lack of any other legal remedy. *Wilson*, 378 S.C. at 354, 662 S.E.2d at 583. A ministerial act or duty is one which a person performs because of a legal mandate which is defined with such precision as to leave nothing to the exercise of discretion. *Id.*

¹ <https://www.richlandcountysc.gov/Government/Departments/Legislative/Legislative-Delegation>, last visited July 13, 2023.

This Court has previously examined the process of appointment of masters-in-equity. *Bank of N.Y. v. Sumter Cty.*, 387 S.C. 147, 691 S.E.2d 473 (2010). In that case, this Court explained:

The master-in-equity courts, which are county-based, are part of the unified judicial system. S.C. Code Ann. § 14-11-10 (Supp. 2008); *Kramer v. County Council of Dorchester County*, 277 S.C. 71, 282 S.E.2d 850 (1981). The master is appointed to a six-year term by the Governor, subject to the advice and consent of the General Assembly. S.C. Code Ann. § 14-11-20 (Supp. 2008). Candidates for the office must submit applications to, and be reviewed by, the Judicial Merit Selection Commission (Commission), which then submits reports and recommendations to the county legislative delegation. S.C. Code Ann. § 2-19-110 (2005). Only candidates found qualified by the Commission may be submitted by the delegation to the Governor for consideration as appointee to the office. *Id.*

Bank of N.Y. v. Sumter Cty., 387 S.C. at 152, 691 S.E.2d at 476.

Thus, the process of submitting the recommendation to the Governor is an obligation of the legislative delegation. Only the JMSC has the discretion to find a candidate qualified, and the Governor has the discretion to appoint a nominee. Therefore, submitting a recommendation to the Governor is a “purely ministerial act” in which the legislative delegation has no discretion to determine if, how, or when to submit a nominee to the Governor. If there is only one candidate found qualified by the JMSC, as was the case for Judge Strickland in January 2021, then the RCLD must submit that candidate to the Governor for consideration.

In *Edwards v. State*, 383 S.C. 82, 678 S.E.2d 412 (2009), this Court granted a writ of mandamus against Governor Sandford directing him to submit the application for and effectuate the State’s receipt of certain federal funding. The Court held that the act of submitting the application was “purely ministerial” and left nothing to the Governor’s discretion. In so holding, the Court stated:

In §14005(a), the ARRA provides, "[t]he Governor of a State desiring to receive an allocation under section 14001 shall submit an application" Similarly, §14005(c) provides "[t]he Governor of a State seeking a grant . . . shall . . . submit an application for consideration. . . ."

We accordingly construe the participial phrase "desiring to receive an allocation [or seeking a grant]" in §14005 as modifying the word immediately preceding it--"State"--to avoid any conflict between our State constitutional allocation of power and the ARRA. With this construction, it is the State which must desire to receive the funds and grants, not merely the Governor. The Governor is the officer designated by Congress to perform the ministerial act of submitting the State's application for the funds."

Edwards v. State, 383 S.C. 82, 94, 678 S.E.2d 412, 419 (2009)

This Court has also granted a writ of mandamus to force the Department of Revenue to remit Penny Tax revenues to Richland County, finding the Department of Revenue had a ministerial duty to do so under the applicable statute. *Richland Cty. v. S.C. Dep't of Revenue*, 422 S.C. 292, 309, 811 S.E.2d 758, 767 (2018). The statute at issue there stated:

After deducting the amount of refunds made and costs to the Department of Revenue of administering the tax, ... the State Treasurer shall distribute the revenues and all interest earned on the revenues while on deposit with him quarterly to the county in which the tax is imposed, and these revenues and interest earnings must be used only for the purpose stated in the imposition ordinance.

This Court emphasized the legislature's use of "shall distribute" in the statute meant that the action was mandatory. See *S.C. Police Officers Ret. Sys. v. City of Spartanburg*, 301 S.C. 188, 191, 391 S.E.2d 239, 241 (1990); *Collins v. Doe*, 352 S.C. 462, 470, 574 S.E.2d 739, 743 (2002) ("use of words such as 'shall or must' indicates the legislature's intent to enact a mandatory requirement"). The Court explained that such mandatory language is unambiguous, and that the Court has "no right to impose another meaning." *Id.* at 309; see also *Hodges v. Rainey*, 341 S.C. 79, 85, 533 S.E.2d 578, 581

(2000) (“Where the statute's language is plain and unambiguous, and conveys a clear and definite meaning, the rules of statutory interpretation are not needed and the court has no right to impose another meaning.)

In the instant case, the applicable statute states, “The county legislative delegation **shall** then submit the name of a candidate to the Governor for consideration for appointment.” S.C. Code Ann. § 2-19-110 (emphasis added). “Shall then submit” is plain and unambiguous and conveys the clear meaning that the RCLD has a duty to submit Judge Strickland’s name to the Governor. The act of submitting Judge Strickland’s name to the Governor is ministerial in nature because of the mandatory “shall” language. The RCLD had no discretion to choose not submit Judge Strickland’s name to the Governor, nor to delay in such submission. The RCLD has the ability to execute that mandatory act.

Once reported out as the only qualified candidate for the position of Richland County Master-in-Equity, Judge Strickland had a right to his name being reported to the Governor. Because the language of the statute is mandatory— “shall submit” —Judge Strickland has no legal remedy other than to seek mandamus from this Court directing the RCLD to carry out its statutory duty.

Accordingly, this Court should issue a writ of mandamus directing the RCLD to submit Judge Strickland’s name to the Governor for appointment to the position of Richland County Master-in-Equity.

INJUNCTION TO JUDICIAL MERIT SELECTION COMMISSION

Respondent JMSC has absolute control over which judicial candidates will, and will not, be submitted to the Legislature for a vote. *Segars-Andrews v. Judicial Merit Selection Comm'n*, 387 S.C. 109, 114, 691 S.E.2d 453, 456 (2010). However, it does not

have authority to determine that a judicial vacancy exists. By issuing the Notice of Judicial Vacancy on July 3, 2023, Respondent JMSC would appear to have made the determination that a vacancy does exist in the position of Richland County Master-in-Equity. **Ex. 3, Notice of Judicial Vacancy.** As the very last item on the list of judicial vacancies, the Notice states:

There is a vacancy in the office currently held by the Honorable Joseph M. Strickland, Master-in-Equity, Richland County. The successor will serve the remainder of the unexpired term of office, which expires April 30, 2027.

The Notice further states that Respondent JMSC is accepting applications for the position of Richland County Master until noon on August 4, 2023. Petitioner requests that this Court issue an injunction directing the JMSC to withdraw the Notice stating that a vacancy exists in the position of Richland County Master-in-Equity and to cease accepting or processing any applications for the position of Richland County Master-in-Equity.

If this Court determines that Respondent RCLD must submit Judge Strickland's name to the Governor, then the JMSC is without authority to conduct any further screening of candidates for the RCLD's consideration for this position. In that case, this Court must enjoin the JMSC from taking such action.

If the JMSC is allowed to continue accepting applications and processing and screening applicants for the position, Judge Strickland will suffer irreparable harm to his right to be the sole candidate for the position as he was reported out by the JMSC in January 2021. There is no other adequate remedy at law that could prevent Judge Strickland from losing his judicial position to another candidate if screening continued and another candidate was reported out by the JMSC to the RCLD. Accordingly, this Court should grant a permanent injunction to prohibit the JMSC from accepting, processing, or

screening any other candidates for the term for the Richland County Master-in-Equity beginning on May 1, 2021 and ending April 30, 2027.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the foregoing, this Court should issue a writ of mandamus directing the RCLD to submit Judge Strickland's name to the Governor for the office of Richland County Master-in-Equity. This Court should also issue an injunction directing the JMSC to withdraw its posting of a vacancy in the office of Richland County Master-in-Equity and to halt the acceptance or processing of any applications for the office of Richland County Master-in-Equity and order any other relief necessary to effectuate such mandamus and injunction.

In addition, Judge Strickland seeks to recover all costs and expenses for the Petition from Respondents pursuant to SC Code 15-11-300 and Rule 65(f)(2).

Respectfully submitted,

s/Kathleen McDaniel

Nekki Shutt, Esq. (SC Bar 8784)

Kathleen McDaniel, Esq. (SC Bar 74826)

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ATTORNEYS FOR PETITIONER

Columbia, South Carolina

July 13, 2023

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE SUPREME COURT

The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland,

Petitioner,


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Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD); Leon Howard, in his official capacity as Chairman of RCLD; Beth E. Bernstein, in her official capacity as Vice Chair of the RCLD; John L. Scott, Jr. in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Richard A. "Dick" Harpootlian in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Darrell Jackson in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Mia S. McLeod in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; J. Thomas McElveen, III in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Annie E. McDaniel in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; Jermaine Johnson, Sr. in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Nathan Ballentine in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Seth C. Rose in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Christopher R. Hart in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; J. Todd Rutherford in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Heather Bauer in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; Kambrell H. Garvin in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Ivory T. Thigpen in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Richland County; and the Judicial Merit Selection Commission,

Respondents.

VERIFICATION

PERSONALLY appeared before me The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland, who, being duly sworn, deposes and states that he has read the allegations contained in the **Verified Petition for Writ of Mandamus and Injunctive Relief and Request for Expedited Consideration** and the same are true, based upon his personal knowledge, except those stated to be based upon information and belief, and as to those, they are believed to be true.


THE HONORABLE JOSEPH M. STRICKLAND

Sworn to before me the 13th
day of July, 2023



Notary Public for South Carolina
Commission Expires: Feb 2, 2026

EXHIBIT 1

Judicial Merit Selection Commission

Report of Candidate Qualifications

MASTER-IN-EQUITY RICHLAND COUNTY

Date Draft Report Issued: Thursday, January 14, 2021

Date and Time:

Final Report Issued: Noon, Tuesday, January 19, 2021

**Judicial candidates are not free to
seek or accept commitments until
Tuesday, January 19, 2021, at Noon.**

Judicial Merit Selection Commission

Sen. Luke A. Rankin, Chairman
Rep. G. Murrell Smith Jr., Vice-Chairman
Sen. Ronnie A. Sabb
Sen. Scott Talley
Rep. J. Todd Rutherford
Rep. Chris Murphy
Hope Blackley-Logan
Lucy Grey McIver
Andrew N. Safran
J.P. "Pete" Strom Jr.



Erin B. Crawford, Chief Counsel
Emma Dean, Counsel

Post Office Box 142
Columbia, South Carolina 29202
(803) 212-6623

January 14, 2021

Dear Legislative Delegation for Richland County:

Enclosed is the Judicial Merit Selection Commission's report of candidate qualifications for the candidate who is offered to serve as Master-in-Equity for Richland County. This report is designed to assist you in determining how to cast your vote. The Commission is charged by law with ascertaining whether judicial candidates are qualified for service on the bench. In accordance with this mandate, the Commission has thoroughly investigated the judicial candidates for their suitability for judicial service. The Commission found the candidate discussed in this report to be qualified for appointment.

The Commission's finding that a candidate is qualified means that the candidate satisfies both the statutory criteria for judicial office and the Commission's evaluative criteria. The attached report details each candidate's qualifications as they relate to the Commission's evaluative criteria.

Judicial candidates are prohibited from asking for your commitment until **12:00 Noon on Tuesday, January 19, 2021**. Further, members of the General Assembly are not permitted to issue letters of introduction, announcements of candidacy, statements detailing a candidate's qualifications, or commitments to vote for a candidate **until 12:00 Noon on Tuesday, January 19, 2021**. In summary, no member of the General Assembly should, orally or in writing, communicate about a candidate's candidacy until this designated time after release of the **Judicial Merit Selection Commission's Report of Candidate Qualifications**. If you find a candidate violating the pledging prohibitions or if you have questions about this report, please contact Erin B. Crawford, Chief Counsel to the Commission, at (803) 212-6689.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Senator Luke A. Rankin

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INTRODUCTION

The Judicial Merit Selection Commission is charged by law to consider the qualifications of candidates for the judiciary. This report details the reasons for the Commission's findings, as well as each candidate's qualifications as they relate to the Commission's evaluative criteria. The Commission operates under the law that went into effect on July 1, 1997, and which dramatically changed the powers and duties of the Commission. One component of this law is that the Commission's finding of "qualified" or "not qualified" is binding on the General Assembly. The Commission is also cognizant of the need for members of the General Assembly to be able to differentiate between candidates and, therefore, has attempted to provide as detailed a report as possible.

The Judicial Merit Selection Commission is composed of ten members, four of whom are non-legislators. The Commission has continued the more in-depth screening format started in 1997. The Commission has asked candidates their views on issues peculiar to service on the court to which they seek election. These questions were posed in an effort to provide members of the General Assembly with more information about candidates and the candidates' thought processes on issues relevant to their candidacies. The Commission has also engaged in a more probing inquiry into the depth of a candidate's experience in areas of practice that are germane to the office he or she is seeking. The Commission feels that candidates should have familiarity with the subject matter of the courts for which they offer, and feels that candidates' responses should indicate their familiarity with most major areas of the law with which they will be confronted.

The Commission also used the Citizens Committees on Judicial Qualifications as an adjunct of the Commission. Since the decisions of our judiciary play such an important role in people's personal and professional lives, the Commission believes that all South Carolinians should have a voice in the selection of the state's judges. It was this desire for broad-based grassroots participation that led the Commission to create the Citizens Committees on Judicial Qualifications. These committees are composed of individuals who are both racially and gender diverse, and who also have a broad range of professional experiences (*i.e.*, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, bankers, and advocates for various organizations). The committees were asked to advise the Commission on the judicial candidates in their regions. Each regional committee interviewed the candidates from its assigned area and also interviewed other individuals in that region who were familiar with the candidate either personally or professionally. Based on those interviews and its own investigation, each committee provided the Commission with a report on their assigned candidates based on the Commission's evaluative criteria. The Commission then used these reports as a tool for further investigation of the candidate if the committee's report so warranted. Summaries of these reports have also been included in the Commission's report for your review.

The Commission conducts a thorough investigation of each candidate's professional, personal, and financial affairs, and holds public hearings during which each candidate is questioned on a wide variety of issues. The Commission's investigation focuses on the following evaluative criteria: constitutional qualifications, ethical fitness, professional and academic ability,

character, reputation, physical health, mental health, and judicial temperament. The Commission's investigation includes the following:

- (1) survey of the bench and bar through BallotBox online;
- (2) SLED and FBI investigation;
- (3) credit investigation;
- (4) grievance investigation;
- (5) study of application materials;
- (6) verification of ethics compliance;
- (7) search of newspaper articles;
- (8) conflict of interest investigation;
- (9) court schedule study;
- (10) study of appellate record;
- (11) court observation; and
- (12) investigation of complaints.

While the law provides that the Commission must make findings as to qualifications, the Commission views its role as also including an obligation to consider candidates in the context of the judiciary on which they would serve and, to some degree, govern. To that end, the Commission inquires as to the quality of justice delivered in the courtrooms of South Carolina and seeks to impart, through its questioning, the view of the public as to matters of legal knowledge and ability, judicial temperament, and the absoluteness of the Judicial Canons of Conduct as to recusal for conflict of interest, prohibition of ex parte communication, and the disallowance of the acceptance of gifts. However, the Commission is not a forum for reviewing the individual decisions of the state's judicial system absent credible allegations of a candidate's violations of the Judicial Canons of Conduct, the Rules of Professional Conduct, or any of the Commission's nine evaluative criteria that would impact a candidate's fitness for judicial service.

The Commission expects each candidate to possess a basic level of legal knowledge and ability, to have experience that would be applicable to the office sought, and to exhibit a strong adherence to codes of ethical behavior. These expectations are all important, and excellence in one category does not make up for deficiencies in another.

Routine questions related to compliance with ethical Canons governing ethics and financial interests are now administered through a written questionnaire mailed to candidates and completed by them in advance of each candidate's staff interview. These issues are no longer automatically made a part of the public hearing process unless a concern or question was raised during the investigation of the candidate. The necessary public record of a candidate's pledge to uphold the Canons is his or her completed and sworn questionnaire.

This report is the culmination of lengthy, detailed investigatory work and public hearings. The Commission takes its responsibilities seriously, believing that the quality of justice delivered in South Carolina's courtrooms is directly affected by the thoroughness of its screening process. Please carefully consider the contents of this report, which we believe will help you make a more informed decision. Please note that the candidates' responses included herein are restated verbatim from the documents that the candidates submitted as part of their application to

the Judicial Merit Selection Commission. All candidates were informed that the Commission does not revise or alter the candidates' submissions, and thus, any errors or omissions in the information contained in this draft report existed in the original documents that the candidate submitted to the Commission.

This Report conveys the Commission's findings as to the qualifications of the candidate currently offered for re-appointment to the position of Master-in-Equity for Richland County.

The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland
Master-in-Equity, Richland County

Commission's Findings: **QUALIFIED**

(1) Constitutional Qualifications:

Based on the Commission's investigation, Judge Strickland meets the qualifications prescribed by law for judicial service as a Master-in-Equity.

Judge Strickland was born in 1955. He is 65 years old and a resident of Columbia, South Carolina. Judge Strickland provided in his application that he has been a resident of South Carolina for at least the immediate past five years and has been a licensed attorney in South Carolina since 1985. He was also admitted to the Washington, D.C. Bar in 1984.

(2) Ethical Fitness:

The Commission's investigation did not reveal any evidence of unethical conduct by Judge Strickland.

Judge Strickland demonstrated an understanding of the Canons of Judicial Conduct and other ethical considerations important to judges, particularly in the areas of ex parte communications, acceptance of gifts and ordinary hospitality, and recusal.

Judge Strickland reported that he has not made any campaign expenditures.

Judge Strickland testified he has not:

- (a) sought or received the pledge of any legislator prior to screening;**
- (b) sought or been offered a conditional pledge of support by a legislator;**
- (c) asked third persons to contact members of the General Assembly prior to screening.**

Judge Strickland testified that he is aware of the Commission's 48-hour rule regarding the formal and informal release of the Screening Report.

(3) Professional and Academic Ability:

The Commission found Judge Strickland to be intelligent and knowledgeable.

Judge Strickland reported that he has taught the following law-related courses: South Carolina Bar CLE: "Against the Wind: A Legal History of Civil Rights in SC through Cases & Testimony"; Co-planner and presenter, February 23, 2017; National Award of Professional Excellence from the Association for Continuing Legal Education.

Judge Strickland reported that he has not published any books or articles.

(4) Character:

The Commission's investigation of Judge Strickland did not reveal evidence of any founded grievances or criminal allegations made against him.

The Commission's investigation of Judge Strickland did not indicate any evidence of a troubled financial status. Judge Strickland has handled his financial affairs responsibly.

The Commission also noted that Judge Strickland was punctual and attentive in his dealings with the Commission, and the Commission's investigation did not reveal any problems with his diligence and industry.

(5) Reputation:

Judge Strickland reported that he has not been rated by a legal rating organization.

Judge Strickland reported the following military service:

United States Army Reserve, 1977 through 1985. 1st Lieutenant. Resigned Commission in 1997. Honorable Discharge.

Judge Strickland reported that he has held the following public office:

- (a) Appointed Member, Richland County Planning Commission, 1986 – 1987
 - (b) Appointed Member, S.C. Jobs Economic Development Authority, 1987 – 1989
 - (c) Elected Member, S.C. Republican Party Executive Committee, 1987- 1989
- I have always timely filed my report with the State Ethics Commission during the period I have held public office

(6) Physical Health:

Judge Strickland appears to be physically capable of performing the duties of the office he seeks.

(7) Mental Stability:

Judge Strickland appears to be mentally capable of performing the duties of the office he seeks.

(8) Experience:

Judge Strickland was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in 1985.

He gave the following account of his legal experience since graduation from law school:

- (a) My first job was second assistant Parliamentarian of the United States Senate in 1981. I worked primarily on the floor of the Senate and advised senators on the rules and procedure of the Senate based primarily on the United States Constitution. I was hired for that job on the recommendation of the Majority Leader, Howard H. Baker, Jr.
- (b) I worked briefly for a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission in 1984. I attended meetings with industry representatives and was exposed to administrative law. I had earlier applied for a judicial clerkship.
- (c) Judge Matthew J. Perry personally called me and asked if I was ready to come home. I said yes and clerked with him for one year from 1984-1985. During that time I was exposed to litigation under the mentorship of one of the greatest trial lawyers in the history of South Carolina. His intellect and civility set an example I emulate to this day.

- (d) While working for Judge Perry I interviewed and was offered a job with Nelson Mullins Grier and Scarborough. The name changed to Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough after a former governor joined the firm. There, I worked primarily with Stephen G. Morrison starting in 1985. His practice exposed me to products liability and commercial litigation.
- (e) In 1989 I was one of thirteen people who applied for an open position as Master-in-Equity for Richland County. I was appointed by Governor Carroll A. Campbell, Jr. with the advice and consent of the South Carolina General Assembly. I dispose of between 1500 and 2000 civil non-jury cases a year. This job requires an extensive knowledge of the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure as well as general knowledge of all court rules and the law. Further, I handle millions of dollars of cash and real estate. In thirty-one years of service I have never had a critical audit or any question raised about my office trust account. I deal with a wide variety of lenders, investors and their attorneys. I can't recall any complaints or questions from anyone.

Judge Strickland reported that he has held the following judicial office(s):
Richland County Master-in-Equity from 1989 to the present. I was appointed. The Master-in-Equity can hear any civil non-jury case referred by a Circuit Court Judge. Once the case is referred, the Master-in-Equity has the same power as a Circuit Court Judge sitting non-jury.

Judge Strickland provided the following list of his most significant orders or opinions:

- (a) *Obraitis v. Obraitis*, 360 S.C. 520, 602 S.E.2d. 108 (Ct. App. 2004)
- (b) *Sloan v. Friends of the Hunley*, 393 S.C. 152, 711 S.E.2d. 895 (2011)
- (c) *Catawba Indian Tribe v. State*, 372 S.C. 519, 642 S.E.2d. 751 (2007)
- (d) *Adkins v. Department of Corrections*, 360 S.C. 413, 602 S.E.2d. 51 (2004)
- (e) *Mazloom v. Mazloom*, 392 S.C. 403, 709 S.E.2d 661 (2011)

Judge Strickland has reported no other employment while serving as a judge.

Judge Strickland further reported the following regarding unsuccessful candidacies:

- (a) In 2006, I was an unsuccessful candidate for S.C. Circuit Court Judge.
- (b) In 2001, I was an unsuccessful candidate for S.C. Circuit Court Judge.
- (c) In 1998, I was an unsuccessful candidate for S.C. Circuit Court Judge and U.S. Magistrate.

(9) Judicial Temperament:

The Commission believes that Judge Strickland's temperament has been, and would continue to be, excellent.

(10) Miscellaneous:

The Midlands Citizens Committee found Judge Strickland "Qualified" in the evaluative criteria of constitutional qualifications, physical health, and mental stability; and "Well Qualified" in the evaluative criteria of ethical fitness, professional and academic ability, character, reputation, experience, and judicial temperament. The Committee stated in summary, "Extremely qualified."

Judge Strickland is married to Karen Ann Grogan Strickland. He has one child.

Judge Strickland reported that he was a member of the following Bar and professional associations:

- (a) South Carolina Master-in-Equity Judges Association
 - a. Vice President (2006 – 2008)
 - b. President (2008 – 2010)
- (b) District of Columbia Bar Association
- (c) Richland County Bar Association
- (d) South Carolina Bar Association
- (e) South Carolina Black Lawyers Association
- (f) National Bar Association
- (g) American Bar Association
- (h) South Carolina Women Lawyers Association

Judge Strickland provided that he was a member of the following civic, charitable, educational, social, or fraternal organizations:

- (a) Member, SC Republican Party State Executive Committee representing Richland County, 1987-1989
- (b) Member, Richland County Republican Party Executive Committee, 1986-1989
- (c) Chairman, SC Republican Party State Platform Committee, 1989
- (d) South Carolina Presidential Elector (Electoral College) pledged to George H. W. Bush, 1988
- (e) Lifetime Member, NAACP
- (f) Member, the Princeton Club of New York, 1977-1993
- (g) Member, the Palmetto Club of Columbia, 1988-Present
- (h) Member, Richland County Planning Commission, 1986-1987
- (i) Member, SC Jobs Economic Development Authority, 1987-1989

(11) Commission Members' Comments:

The Commission commented that Judge Strickland has an outstanding reputation. They noted his great intellect, which has ably served him in discharging his responsibilities as a Master-in-Equity.

(12) Conclusion:

The Commission found Judge Strickland qualified for re-appointment as Master-in-Equity for Richland County.

CONCLUSION

The Judicial Merit Screening Commission found the following candidate QUALIFIED FOR RE-APPOINTMENT:

**MASTER-IN-EQUITY
RICHLAND COUNTY**

The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland

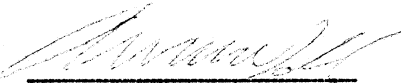
Respectfully submitted,



Senator Luke A. Rankin



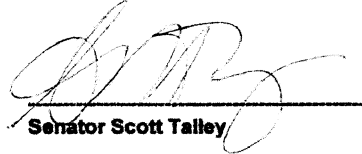
Representative G. Murrell Smith Jr.



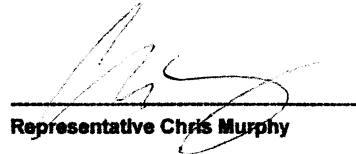
Senator Ronnie A. Sabb



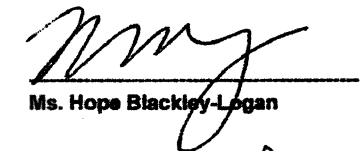
Representative J. Todd Rutherford



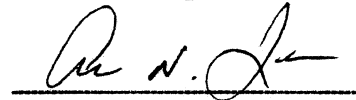
Senator Scott Talley



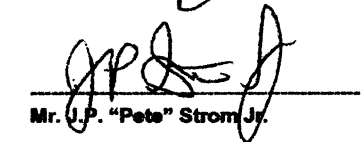
Representative Chris Murphy



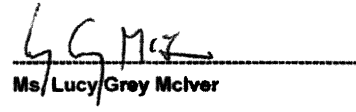
Ms. Hope Blackley-Logan



Mr. Andrew N. Safran



Mr. J.P. "Pete" Strom Jr.



Ms. Lucy Grey McIver

**The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland
Master-in-Equity, Richland County**

The South Carolina Bar's Judicial Qualifications Committee reports that the collective opinion of those Bar members surveyed regarding Judge Strickland's candidacy for the Master-in-Equity, Richland County is as follows:

| Overall | Well-Qualified |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Constitutional Qualifications | Qualified |
| Physical Health | Qualified |
| Mental Stability | Qualified |
| Ethical Fitness | Well-Qualified |
| Character | Well-Qualified |
| Professional and Academic Ability | Well-Qualified |
| Reputation | Well-Qualified |
| Experience | Well-Qualified |
| Judicial Temperament | Well-Qualified |

EXHIBIT 2

Richland County Legislative Delegation

CHAIRMAN, LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
Leon Howard

VICE CHAIRMAN, LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
Beth E. Bernstein

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Kimberly A. Jänha, Ph.D.



MEMBERS OF THE SENATE
Dist. 19 - John L. Scott, Jr.
Dist. 20 - Richard A. "Dick" Harpootlian
Dist. 21 - Darrell Jackson
Dist. 22 - Mia S. McLeod
Dist. 35 - J. Thomas McElveen, III

MEMBERS OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Dist. 41 - Annie E. McDaniel
Dist. 70 - Jermaine Johnson, Sr.
Dist. 71 - Nathan Ballentine
Dist. 72 - Seth C. Rose
Dist. 73 - Christopher R. Hart
Dist. 74 - J. Todd Rutherford
Dist. 75 - Heather Bauer
Dist. 76 - Leon Howard
Dist. 77 - Kambrell H. Garvin
Dist. 78 - Beth E. Bernstein
Dist. 79 - Ivory T. Thigpen

June 28, 2023

Judicial Merit Selection Commission
Erin B. Crawford, Chief Counsel
Post Office Box 142
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Dear Counsel Crawford,

Please allow this correspondence to serve as a notice of occurred vacancy in the appointed position of Master-In-Equity for Richland County.

As you are aware, Judge Joseph M. Strickland was last screened by the Judicial Merit Selection Commission (JMSC) in November of 2020 for a term that would begin 5/1/21 and end 4/30/27. There were no other candidates that were screened for this position. The Commission found Judge Strickland qualified and sent its report to the Richland County legislative delegation, pursuant to Section 2-19-110. The legislative delegation did not agree to submit his name to the Governor for consideration for appointment, and would like the opportunity to allow others to be screened. As such, Judge Strickland has remained in this position while a vacancy remains due to the expiration of his term.

The Richland County Legislative Delegation wishes to move forward in the process to fill this vacancy. We ask the JMSC to announce this vacancy, as soon as possible, so that the JMSC may screen for this position and a successor may be appointed to fill the unexpired term ending 4/30/27.

Please feel free to contact us if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leon Howard".

Leon Howard
Chairman

LH/kj

EXHIBIT 3

Judicial Merit Selection Commission

Rep. Micajah P. "Micah" Caskey, IV, Chairman
Sen. Luke A. Rankin, Vice-Chairman
Sen. Ronnie A. Sabb
Sen. Scott Talley
Rep. J. Todd Rutherford
Rep. Wallace H. "Jay" Jordan, Jr.
Hope Blackley
Lucy Grey McIver
Andrew N. Safran
J.P. "Pete" Strom Jr.



Erin B. Crawford, Chief Counsel
Patrick Dennis, Counsel

Post Office Box 142
Columbia, South Carolina 29202
(803) 212-6623

MEDIA RELEASE

July 3, 2023

The Judicial Merit Selection Commission is accepting applications for the judicial offices listed below that were newly created as per Act 232 of 2022:

A vacancy will exist in the newly created seat for the Circuit Court, Second Judicial Circuit, Seat 2. The term will be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2030.

A vacancy will exist in the newly created seat for the Circuit Court, Ninth Judicial Circuit, Seat 4. The term will be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2030.

A vacancy will exist in the newly created seat for the Circuit Court, Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, Seat 3. The term will be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2030.

A vacancy will exist in the newly created seat for the Circuit Court, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, Seat 3. The term will be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2030.

A vacancy will exist in the newly created seat for the Family Court, First Judicial Circuit, Seat 4. The term will be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2030.

A vacancy will exist in the newly created seat for the Family Court, Seventh Judicial Circuit, Seat 4. The term will be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2030.

A vacancy will exist in the newly created seat for the Family Court, Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, Seat 3. The term will be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2030.

The Judicial Merit Selection Commission is accepting applications for the judicial offices listed below:

A vacancy will exist in the office currently held by the Honorable Jeffrey M. Tzerman, Master-in-Equity, Kershaw County, upon his retirement on December 31, 2023. The successor will serve the remainder of the unexpired term of that office, which expires June 30, 2025.

There is a vacancy in the office currently held by the Honorable Joseph M. Strickland, Master-in-Equity, Richland County. The successor will serve the remainder of the unexpired term of that office, which expires April 30, 2027.

In order to receive application materials, a prospective candidate must notify the Commission in writing of his or her intent to apply. Note that an email will suffice for written notification.

Please note: The Commission will not accept applications for the seats above after 12:00 pm (noon) on Friday, August 4, 2023.

Correspondence and questions should be directed to the Judicial Merit Selection Commission as follows:

Erin B. Crawford, Chief Counsel
ErinCrawford@scsenate.gov or (803) 212-6689

or

Lindi Putnam, JMSC Administrative Assistant
LindiPutnam@scsenate.gov or (803) 212-6623

As a reminder: The Commission will not accept applications for the seats referenced in the June 12 media release after 12:00 pm (noon) on Friday, July 14, 2023.

**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE SUPREME COURT**

The Honorable Joseph M. Strickland,

Petitioner,

v.

Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD); Leon Howard, in his official capacity as Chairman of RCLD; Beth E. Bernstein, in her official capacity as Vice Chair of the RCLD; John L. Scott, Jr. in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Richard A. "Dick" Harpootlian in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Darrell Jackson in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Mia S. McLeod in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; J. Thomas McElveen, III in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Annie E. McDaniel in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; Jermaine Johnson, Sr. in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Nathan Ballentine in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Seth C. Rose in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Christopher R. Hart in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; J. Todd Rutherford in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Heather Bauer in her official capacity as member of the RCLD; Kambrell H. Garvin in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Ivory T. Thigpen in his official capacity as member of the RCLD; Richland County; and the Judicial Merit Selection Commission,

Respondents.

PROOF OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have served a copy of the following as indicated herein below, by mailing a copy of the same on the date below by Certified, First-Class United States Mail, postage prepaid, return-receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee and by email in certain cases addressed as follows:

DOCUMENT SERVED: Petitioner's Verified Petition for Writ of Mandamus and Injunctive Relief and Request for Expedited Consideration

PARTIES SERVED:

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Annie E. McDaniel , in her official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) 330C Blatt Bldg Columbia, SC 29201 | Beth E. Bernstein, Esq. , her official capacity of Vice Chair of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 583 Columbia, SC 29202 Beth@bblawsc.com | Leon Howard , in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) South Carolina House 519 Blatt Building Columbia, SC 29211 |
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| <p>Christopher R. “Chris” Hart, in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) 5219 Burke Ave Columbia, SC 29203</p> | <p>Darrell Jackson, in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) 608 Motley Road Hopkins, SC 29061</p> | <p>Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) By and through its chair, Leon Howard 1701 Main Street, Suite 409 Columbia, SC 29201 rclegdel@rcgov.us</p> |
| <p>Heather Bauer, in her official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 7714 Columbia, SC 29202</p> | <p>Judicial Merit Selection Commission, by and through Erin Crawford, Esq., its Chief Counsel and agent for service of process 104 Gressette Building Columbia, SC 29201 erincrawford@scsenate.gov</p> | <p>Richland County By and through Overture Walker, Esq. as Chair of Richland County Council 2020 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29204 rccoco@richlandcountysc.gov adminoffice@richlandcountysc.gov walker.overture@richlandcountysc.gov</p> |
| <p>Jermaine L. Johnson, Sr., in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 461 Hopkins, SC 29061</p> | <p>Ivory T. Thigpen, in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 291416 Columbia, SC 29229</p> | <p>Judicial Merit Selection Commission, by and through its counsel and agent for service of process, Erin Crawford, Esq. 104 Gressette Building Columbia, SC 29201</p> |
| <p>Mia S. McLeod, in her official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 290692 Columbia, SC 29229</p> | <p>John Scott, Jr., in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) 215 Elmton Drive Columbia, SC 29203</p> | <p>Richard A. Harpootlian, Esq., in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 1090 Columbia, SC 29202 rah@harpootlianlaw.com</p> |
| <p>Nathan Ballentine, in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) 108 Tapp Pointe Chapin, SC 29036</p> | <p>Kambrell H. Garvin, in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) South Carolina House 1803 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29201</p> | <p>The Honorable Alan M. Wilson Attorney General for the State of South Carolina Rembert Dennis Building 1000 Assembly Street, Room 519 Columbia, SC 29201</p> |

| | | |
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| <p>Seth C. Rose, Sr., Esq., in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) 1528 Blanding Street Columbia, SC 29201 Seth@sethroselaw.com</p> | <p>James Todd Rutherford, Esq., in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 1452 Columbia, SC 29202-2139 todd@rutherford.law</p> | <p>Thomas McElveen, III, in his official capacity as member of the Richland County Legislative Delegation (RCLD) P.O. Box 57 Sumter, SC 29151</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

s/Nekki Shutt
Nekki Shutt, Esq.
BURNETTE SHUTT & MCDANIEL, P.A

July 13, 2023

Columbia, South Carolina