

OPENING STATEMENT

Good afternoon Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Vernon Oliver and I am honored to have this opportunity to come before you. I wish to express my thanks to Governor Rell for nominating me for appointment as a judge of the Superior Court and my thanks to this committee for the time and effort dedicated to this task.

I live in Portland with my wife and our three year old daughter and one year old son. Prior to our marriage, I lived for ten years in the South and West Ends of Hartford.

I was born and raised in the North End of Bridgeport, graduating from the public schools. I was fortunate to have a loving family and strong, caring parents who valued formal education, despite its absence from their own lives. From them, I learned the importance of faith, family, self-reliance and public service.

While a student at the University of Connecticut, I volunteered as an intern at the Office of Adult Probation in Hartford. Also while in college, I volunteered as an intern at the Bridgeport Office of the Public Defender.

I then attended the University Of Connecticut School Of Law. During law school, I was employed at Neighborhood Legal Services in Hartford as a legal intern, focusing on landlord-tenant law. I was a member of the Moot Court Board, competing in national competitions and in 1997; my team was awarded Best Brief in a National Competition in Florida. That summer, I was a summer associate at Cohen & Wolf, in Bridgeport, where I researched and wrote on a variety of issues related to commercial litigation.

After law school, I was employed as a temporary assistant clerk in Part A in Hartford before working as an associate at Montstream & May in Glastonbury. While there, I performed legal work in various areas of law related to personal injury and insurance defense, including motor vehicle accidents, premises liability and food-borne illnesses.

In 1999, I was hired by the Division of Criminal Justice as a prosecutor at the Office of the Chief State's Attorney. This position involved statewide travel in the prosecution of felonies and misdemeanors.

In 1999 and 2000, I sat second chair to Senior Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney Herbert E. Carlson in a Capital Felony trial. I was involved in the preparation and litigation of the myriad of pre-trial motions that are a part of such trials, as well as jury selection, the trial itself, the eventual plea and sentencing of the Defendant. During this time, I developed a greater appreciation of the awesome and difficult responsibility inherent in the privilege of representing the people in criminal prosecutions.

In 2000, I began work at the State's Attorney's Office in Bristol. I was brought in to manage the enormous trial list that had accumulated over the several years that the court was without a full-time trial judge. In so doing, I acquired two equally valuable skills: how to try a case and how to value a case. I also learned that the temperament one brings to one's work is of great importance.

I have tried approximately 22 criminal jury trials to verdict, including charges of sexual assault first degree, burglary first degree, assault first degree, robbery first degree, stalking and crimes of bias and bigotry. Additionally, I have tried numerous misdemeanor and felony cases to the court, including sexual assault second degree.

In 2004 I sought to expand the depth and breadth of my legal knowledge with the Office of the Attorney General's Child Protection Unit, where I litigate petitions brought to the juvenile court by the Department of Children and Families. For nearly five years, I have been assigned to the Child Protection Session in Middletown, which serves as a statewide trial court, accepting cases referred by local juvenile court judges from across the State. The more complex contested matters involve serious physical or sexual abuse of a child and the death of a child or sibling. Cases requiring immediate attention or involving significant expert testimony are referred to this special session in an effort to provide an expeditious resolution consistent with the best interests of the child.

I have tried at least 60 matters to conclusion in trials to the Court. Although the focus of my work in Middletown is largely on trials, I have also represented the State at the appellate level and at the superior court level in appeals brought pursuant to the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act.

The Office of the Attorney General, as did the Division of Criminal Justice, supports my involvement in community service efforts and in 2004, I was honored to be named to the Distinguished Volunteers Roster by the Connecticut Bar Association for work in Bridgeport and Hartford as a career day speaker and occasional commencement speaker in the public schools.

If honored with this opportunity, I will bring to the bench fair-mindedness, neutrality and an equitable temperament, as well as an ability to quickly spot and analyze complex legal issues, trial experience, an inquisitive legal mind and strong research and writing skills.

It is my desire to continue to serve the people of the state of Connecticut in this new capacity with integrity, diligence, fairness and humility and I am hopeful that the totality of my experiences will be useful to the residents of this State if appointed to be a judge of the superior court.

I appreciate your attention and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.