



FAMILY MATTERS

IN THE FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 14 | AUGUST 8, 2025

UPDATES AND
ANNOUNCEMENTS
FOR THE FOURTH
CIRCUIT COURT



HONORING JUDGE PHILIP E. SMITH

We are elated and honored to host the official portrait unveiling of the late Judge Philip E. Smith on Thursday, August 14, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. in the Fourth Circuit courtroom. We look forward to the presence of his family, friends, and colleagues as we celebrate the life and legacy of Judge Smith.

Judge Smith served as the Judge of the Fourth Circuit Court from 2009 until his unexpected passing on September 4, 2022, days after being re-elected to a third term. He is remembered for being sharp-witted, a “learned” trial judge, an advocate for domestic violence victims, and of course, giving out orange Tootsie Pops on adoption days.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS ISSUE

Save the Date!	3
Status Conf. Orders	4
Back to School	5
Chamber Rule Spotlight	5
Calendar	6

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE
PORTRAIT UNVEILING
OF THE LATE

Judge Philip E. Smith

HONORING HIS 13 YEARS PRESIDING OVER
THE FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT

THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2025
2:00 P.M.

HISTORIC METRO COURTHOUSE
1 PUBLIC SQUARE
6TH FLOOR, COURTROOM 607
NASHVILLE, TN 37201

Reception to Follow



Judge Smith graduated from the University of Tennessee College of Law and became a licensed attorney in 1988. He started his legal career working with the Davidson County Office of the District Attorney General. He left the District Attorney's office in 1990 and spent the next 19 years in private practice, with a primary focus in family law. His years of practice garnered recognition in Best Lawyers in America and Mid-South Super Lawyers and admission as a Fellow to the prestigious American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers in 2009, among other accolades.

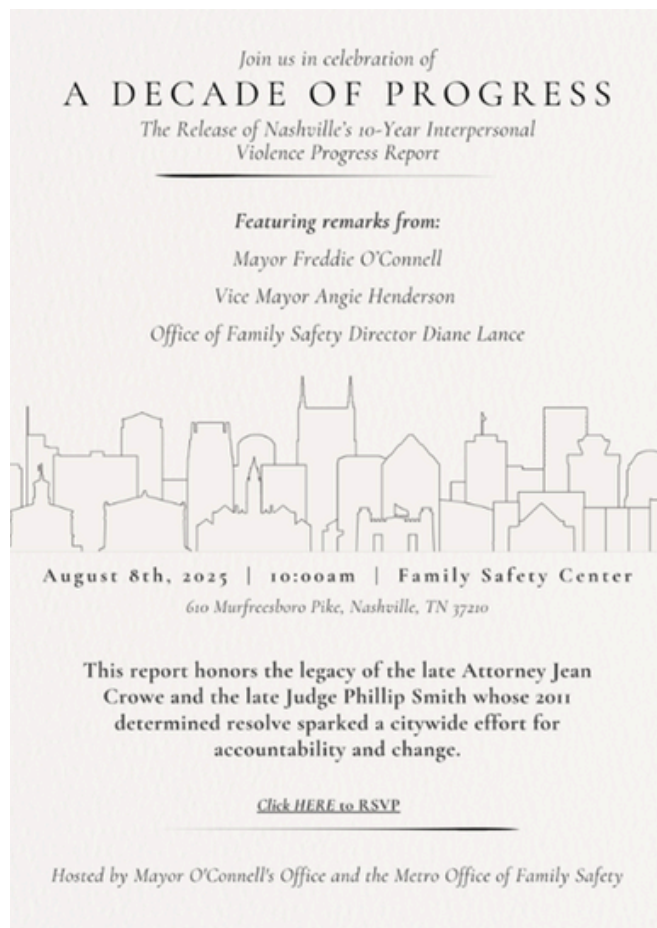
In March of 2009, Judge Smith was appointed to the Fourth Circuit Court by then Governor Phil Bredesen. He was re-elected in 2010, 2014, and 2022. He was one of two judges in Nashville who presided over family law, divorce, and domestic issues. During his time as Judge, he taught Family Law and Domestic Trial Practice at Nashville School of Law.

Hard-working, compassionate, and highly knowledgeable in domestic law, Judge Smith had a passion for fighting against domestic violence. In 2010, he worked alongside Jean Crowe to encourage Mayor Karl Dean to conduct a safety assessment of the domestic violence prevention procedures in Davidson County. These requests led to the Nashville-Davidson County Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Assessment released in 2013, which resulted in many changes and improvements in the prevention of domestic violence, including the creation of the Jean Crowe Advocacy Center and the Family Safety Center. Judge Smith also served on the board of the Family Safety Center. This week will mark a “Decade of Progress” for this collaborative effort as the release of Nashville’s 10-Year Interpersonal Violence Progress Report takes place. This report honors the legacy of both the late Attorney Jean Crowe and Judge Smith. A copy of the report can be found [HERE](#).

If you would like to RSVP for the celebration event at the Family Safety Center, you may do so [HERE](#).

Judge Smith’s legacy is marked by the many lives he touched, the families he fought for, and the lasting impact he has on family law in Davidson County and the state of Tennessee.

We hope you can join us for the portrait unveiling next week.





SAVE THE DATE: UPCOMING EVENTS WITH THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

As part of the Fourth Circuit Court's mission to invest in the growth and development of our families, including the attorneys who represent them, we are excited to announce several upcoming CLEs and family law events. We will provide more information in the coming weeks, however, the dates are as follows:

Friday, October 3, 2025

Children in the Crossfire: The Impact of High Conflict Divorce on Children. Join Judge Williams in collaboration with Trevecca Nazarene University for a valuable and impactful symposium about the effect of a high conflict divorce and custody cases on the people who have the smallest voice in the matter: the children. This day long event will be a collaboration between legal professionals and mental health professionals. CLE and CEU approval pending.



Tuesday & Wednesday, November 18 & 19, 2025



Adoption 101 with the Fourth Circuit Court. This two-day event will educate attorneys on the fundamental process and best practices for handling adoptions in Davidson County and across Tennessee. CLE approval pending.

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Home for the Holidays. Directly following Adoption 101, Judge Williams is proud to announce a day celebrating adoptions and the hard work of attorneys who take court appointed cases in Nashville. Families and attorneys are invited to join us as we honor this joyful process—some adoptions may even be finalized during the event, just in time for the holiday season!



December 2025

Stay tuned for more details on a two-hour CLE focused on high-functioning depression and its impact on legal professionals. In the high-demand, high-emotion field of family law, it is very common for attorneys to experience mental health challenges. This session will offer tools for recognizing and addressing these issues for yourself and your colleagues. Remember, you never know what someone else is going through.

Stay tuned for more details. We hope to see you at these events!

**IN THE FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT OF DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE
AT NASHVILLE**

**ATTORNEY WHO RECEIVED AN ORDER
For Status Conference**

v.

**NOT KNOWING WHAT IT MEANS
And if They Have to Appear**

DOCKET NO. 12D345

ORDER SETTING STATUS CONFERENCE

At the beginning of this year, we had nearly 2,800 pending cases in our Court, many of which had been sitting dormant for years without any activity or filed final order. **As of July 31, 2025, the number of active cases pending in the our Court is 1,259.** This is the result of the diligent efforts of the Fourth Circuit Team to personally review each pending case file to ascertain whether it is timely progressing, should be dismissed, or should be set on a status conference docket. The status conference orders are drafted and mailed to the last attorney of record, or litigants if self represented.

The purpose of these status conferences is to give attorneys and litigants an opportunity to come before the Court to discuss the status of each case including steps needed to dismiss or nonsuit the case or initiate movement so that the case may be properly resolved. **Ahead of the conference**, please review your own files and bring such information that may not be reflected in the Court's record.

Attendance is required as it allows all parties and counsel for parties an equal opportunity to discuss the status of the case as well as appropriate steps forward. However, should the petitioner wish to dismiss and/or nonsuit the case, attorney for the petitioner, or the petitioner if self-represented, may email the Court at ronnellgriffin@jnsnashville.gov and include the opposing counsel, or opposing party if self-represented. Please be sure to also include the docket number, intention to dismiss or nonsuit the case, and any other relevant information the Court needs to know. **In this instance, the Court may inform you that attendance is not required at the status conference.**



Please remember that the option to appear via Zoom is available for every status conference docket. The Zoom link is the same the link to our regular Friday motion docket and is included in every order. You may also scan the QR code to the left to join.

BACK TO SCHOOL!



We're celebrating Back to School here in the Fourth Circuit Court! Shoutout to all the parents who survived summer break. Backpacks are packed, lunches are (kind of) made, and peace & quiet has been restored (for now). Here's to a new school year full of early mornings, homework battles, lots of coffee, and priceless memories!



CHAMBER RULE SPOTLIGHT

RULE XX, PAGE 36: INTERPRETERS

In the event an interpreter is necessary for any hearing in the Fourth Circuit Court, the use of the State Trial Court interpreter, an interpreter approved by the Administrative Office of the Court (AOC), or an interpreter approved by the AOC guidelines, is required. It is incumbent on the party requiring the interpreter to secure the same. An interpreter may be requested using the following link: <https://trialcourts.nashville.gov/interpreter/>. Alternatively, the QR code to the right may be used:



SPANISH COURT TRANSLATIONS / TRADUCCIONES DE INGLÉS AL ESPAÑOL PAR LA CORTE

The Court has provided additional resources for Spanish-speaking litigants. These include a quick reference Spanish translations guide and a translation of our courtroom decorum requirements. You may view the documents by clicking the links or scanning the QR codes below:

[Translations/
Traducciones:](#)



[Decorum/
Decoro:](#)



CALENDAR

S M T W Th F S

				7		
				14		
				21		
					29	

AUGUST

8/7: Special Master's Case Management Docket at 9 a.m. Via Zoom Only

8/14: Judge Philip E. Smith's Portrait Unveiling at 2p.m.

8/21: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

8/29: Office Closed, No Motion Docket

S M T W Th F S

	1					
		9				
					19	

SEPTEMBER

9/1: Office Closed for Labor Day

9/2: ID Divorces with Appearance Waiver Only

9/4: Special Master's Case Management Docket at 9 a.m. Via Zoom, No Pro Se Docket

9/9: ID Divorces with Appearance Waiver Only

9/18: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

9/19: No Motion Docket, Office Open

For a complete view of our regularly scheduled dockets and available court dates, please see the calendar page on our website by clicking here: [Website Calendar](#) or by scanning the QR code:



SHARE!



@JudgeStephanieJWilliams



Judge Stephanie J. Williams

Feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who may be interested. To be added to the mailing list, please email RebekahLHaralson@jishnashville.gov.

Additionally, you may view this and all previous newsletters on our website by clicking this link: [Updates and Announcements](#) or by scanning the QR code:

