

NAME: Charles Bethel
PARTY: Non-Partisan
SEEKING: Georgia Supreme Court

1. Why are you seeking the office?

I am passionate about our constitutional form of government and believe in a strong and independent judiciary that applies the law as written to everyone who comes before it. When Governor Deal entrusted me with this office, I committed to serve the people of Georgia that I would adhere faithfully to our Constitution and code, without respect to my personal preferences. I want to continue that work.

2. What distinguishes your candidacy?

I have a track record of trustworthiness, and my background equipped me for this service. First, I have several years of experience as an appellate judge (both on our Court of Appeals and our Supreme Court). Second, I have served in the State Senate and on my hometown City Council. Last, I have worked as a practicing attorney and in a family manufacturing business. So, I know how to do the work and I also know the practical impact on real Georgians facing real problems.

3. What is the proper role of a judge in interpreting the laws and Constitution?

My job is to ensure that our state and federal constitutions are interpreted and applied in accordance with their original public meaning and that our statutes are given their plainly stated effect. When there is ambiguity, I am obligated to employ established and well known tools of construction. I am prohibited from imposing my own preferred outcomes or policy. Judges who are willing to pursue their preferred outcome or impose their preferred policy expose us to the very real threat of judicial tyranny that our system of separated powers was designed to prevent.

4. What in your life experience makes you believe that you are or would be a good judge?

I believe my experience as a husband, father, church member, human resources executive, youth athletics coach, and mediator all help me serve as a better judge. I have navigated the criminal justice system as a prosecutor and defense attorney. I have assisted friends and co-workers in securing unemployment and workers compensation benefits. I have worked with a city council, a community, and a police force to craft a plan to respond to an increase in gang activity that claimed the life of a young African-American teenager in my city while I served on our City Council.

5. What do you see as a new challenge for judges in a post-pandemic court system?

I believe the challenges on the practical side of “post-pandemic” court life will revolve around finding a safe way to allow jurors, witnesses, and other court attendees to access the courthouse. Additionally, we must consider the logistics of transporting prisoners and court security personnel. Going beyond those practical considerations, I think our court system must further embrace technologies to conduct business remotely.

6. Please give a 100 word summary of your background?

I was born in Athens and raised in Dalton where my family and I reside today. I graduated from Dalton High and earned my business and law degrees from the University of Georgia. I clerked for a federal judge in Atlanta and returned home where I practiced law and worked in the flooring industry. I am married to Lynsey (a Pharmacist) and we are the parents of Henry (17), Jeb (15) and Joanna (8). Our family story would be incomplete without adoption. We are active in our church (First Baptist Dalton) and our Northwest Georgia Community.