

**COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL SELECTION**  
**APPLICATION**  
**SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT**  
**DEPARTMENT 12**

**By**

**SANDRA A. UNSWORTH**



**SECTION I: PUBLIC INFORMATION  
(QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 49)**

**Personal Information**

**1. Full Name:**

Sandra Ann Unsworth

**2. Have you ever used or been known by any other legal name (including a maiden name)? If so, state name and reason for the name change and years used.**

No.

**3. Work Address:**

202 California Avenue  
Reno, Nevada 89509

**4. How long have you been a continuous resident of Nevada?**

59 years, 10 months.

**5. Age:**

**(NRS 3.060 states that a district judge must be at least 25 years old.)**

59

**Employment History**

**6. Using the format provided in Attachment "A" please start with your current employment or most recent employment, self-employment, and periods of unemployment for the 20 years immediately preceding the filing of this Application.**

See Attachment "A."

## Educational Background

- 7 List names and addresses of high schools, colleges and graduate schools (other than law school) attended; dates of attendance; certificates or degrees awarded; reason for leaving.**

Earl Wooster High School  
1331 Plumb Lane  
Reno, Nevada 89502

Dates of Attendance: 1974 - 1977  
Certificate or Degree: High School Diploma  
Reason for Leaving: Graduated

University of Nevada  
1664 North Virginia Street  
Reno, Nevada

Dates of Attendance: 1977 - 1982  
Certificate or Degree: Bachelor of Arts, Criminal Justice  
Reason for Leaving: Graduated

- 8. Describe significant high school and college activities including extracurricular activities, positions of leadership, special projects that contributed to the learning experience.**

In high school, I participated on the Speech and Debate team. I learned public speaking skills and how to craft an argument. I was also an assistant editor for the high school paper. I learned how to write a story and to typeset a small community paper.

In college, I did not participate in organized activities but rather worked at various jobs and attended classes. This taught me how to balance dueling obligations, while still finding time for fun activities, such a skiing and attending college sporting events and concerts.

- 9. List names and addresses of law schools attended; degree and date awarded; your rank in your graduating class; if more than one law school attended, explain reason for change.**

University of Puget Sound, School of Law

The University of Puget Sound School of Law was subsumed by Seattle University as of August 19, 1994. When I attended the school was located on the corner of Eleventh and Broadway. Seattle University School of Law is located at Sullivan Hall, 901 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98122.

Degree: Juris Doctorate  
Date of Degree: May 1986  
Ranking in Graduating Class: 164 out of 294

**10. Indicate whether you were employed during law school, whether the employment was full-time or part-time, the nature of your employment, the name(s) of your employer(s), and dates of employment.**

I was not employed during the school year in law school. I returned home to Reno, Nevada during breaks from school and worked part-time for my parents at a retail yarn shop, known as the Knit Wit, and kept books for my father's electrical contracting company, Unzy Electric. My employers were Robert W. Unsworth and Beverley A. Unsworth.

**11. Describe significant law school activities including offices held, other leadership positions, clinics participated in, and extracurricular activities.**

I did not engage in law school activities beyond my classes and studies. In my first year of law school, my older brother was involved in an automobile accident and was hospitalized for a significant period of time. In my second year of law school, my oldest brother was electrocuted on the job and was hospitalized for more than a year. My law school encouraged me to take a year's deferment to aid my family, but I elected to remain in school, because I feared I would not return to school. So for me the significant activity in law school was the ability to complete my studies while being away from my family during very traumatic events. I came home from Washington State as often as I could, making my family the only significant extracurricular activity I engage in during law school.

**Law Practice**

**12. State the year you were admitted to the Nevada Bar.**

1987.

**13. Name states (other than Nevada) where you are or were admitted to practice law and your year of admission.**

None.

**14. Have you ever been suspended, disbarred, or voluntarily resigned from the practice of law in Nevada or any other state? If so, describe the circumstance, dates, and locations.**

No.

**15. Estimate what percentage of your work over the last 5 years has involved litigation matters, distinguishing between trial and appellate courts. For judges, answer questions 16-20 for the 5 years directly preceding your appointment or election to the bench.**

Approximately eighty-five percent (85%) of my work involves litigation with ninety-nine plus percent (99+%) of this work being in trial courts and less than one percent ( $\leq 1\%$ ) being in appellate courts.

**16. Estimate percentage of time spent on (1) domestic/family and juvenile law matters, (2) civil litigation, (3) criminal matters, and (4) administrative litigation.**

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| 1. Domestic/family and juvenile matters: | 95%        |
| 2. Civil Litigation:                     | $\leq 1\%$ |
| 3. Criminal Law:                         | 4%         |
| 4. Administrative litigation:            | $\leq 1\%$ |

**17. In the past 5 years, what percentage of your litigation matters involved cases set for jury trials vs. non-jury trials?**

In the last 5 years, one hundred percent (100%) of my litigation matters have been non-jury trials.

**18. Give the approximate number of jury cases tried to a conclusion during the past five years with you as lead counsel. Give the approximate number of non-jury cases tried to a decision in the same period.**

I have not tried a jury trial in the past 5 years. During this same period, I have had approximately six (6) bench trials.

**19. List courts and counties in any state where you have practiced in the past 5 years.**

- |                                     |                            |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. Second Judicial District Court   | Washoe                     |
| b. First Judicial District Court    | Carson City                |
| c. Third Judicial District Court    | Lyon                       |
| d. Fourth Judicial District Court   | Elko                       |
| e. Sixth Judicial District Court    | Humboldt                   |
| f. Ninth Judicial District Court    | Douglas                    |
| g. Tenth Judicial District Court    | Churchill                  |
| h. Eleventh Judicial District Court | Pershing, Lander & Mineral |
| i. Reno Justice Court               | Washoe                     |
| j. Sparks Justice Court             | Washoe                     |
| k. Carson City Justice Court        | Carson City                |
| l. Fernley Justice Court            | Lyon                       |
| m. Reno Municipal Court             | Washoe                     |
| n. Fernley Municipal Court          | Lyon                       |
| o. Nevada Appellate Courts          |                            |

**20. List by case name and date the five cases of most significance to you (not including cases pending in which you have been involved), and list or describe:**

**Case Number 1:**

**a. case name and date:**

Pablo Ceasar Garcia, Petitioner v. Amanda Airrington, Respondent and Shawkatara Jahan, Real Party in Interest

2015- 2018

**b. court and presiding judge and all counsel:**

Court: Family Division, Second Judicial District Court

Judges: The Honorable Chuck Weller, presiding judge.  
The Honorable Bridget E. Robb, conducted multiple settlement conferences.  
The Honorable Senior Chief Justice Robert E. Rose, binding settlement conference.

Counsel for Amanda Airrington: In Propria Persona

Counsel for Shawkatara Jahan: Kaitlyn A. Miller  
Michael Keene  
Lauren Berkich

Counsel for Pablo Ceasar Garcia: Sandra A. Unsworth

**c. the importance of each case to you and the impact of each case on you:**

I became involved in late 2015, after Father of the minor child at issue sought a change in the custodial order issued on or about March 27, 2012. Father was seeking primary custody based upon Mother divesting primary custody to a non-relative, third party. The original custodial order afforded Father visitation rights and no legal custody of the minor child. Mother had deprived Father of the right to provide for the minor child; however, the minor child had developed an undeniable bond with the non-relative third party. Over the course of my two and half years working on this case, Father was able to reunify with his son. Father now shares custody with the non-relative third party, with Mother having limited visitation rights and no legal custodial rights.

This case was significant because it was the first case I have been involved in where a non-relative third party was granted status for purposes of determining the

appropriate legal and physical custody of a minor child, wherein the custodial placement of the child that was in the child's best interest took priority over parental claims.

**d. your role in the case.**

Post decree counsel for Father, who was estranged from his son at the start of my representation and joint legal and physical custodial at the conclusion of my representation.

**Case Number 2:**

**a. case name and date:**

Alan Hall, Plaintiff v. Lindsay Velianoff, Defendant

2013 - Present

**b. court and presiding judge and all counsel:**

Court: Family Division, Second Judicial District Court

Judge: The Honorable Bridget E. Robb

Counsel for Alan Hall:

Trial Counsel:

Raymond E. Oster

Appellate Counsel:

Richard F. Cornell

Current Counsel:

Marilyn D. York

Counsel for Lindsay Velianoff:

Sandra A. Unsworth

**c. the importance of each case to you and the impact of each case on you:**

I was retained to assist Mother in 2013 with ongoing issues related to her shared custody of the parties' young son, who was eight years old at the time. By the time I was retained, the parties had been before the Court on four separate occasions related to where their son should attend school. The issue I was retained for was also related to the parties' son's education. Father wanted the child to be placed into a school within a school program (SWAS); Mother wanted the child to be remain at his current elementary school, in a new advanced placement program offered by that school. Further issues in this case related to the parties' differing views on the child's extracurricular activities. Mother requested that she be granted sole legal custody of the parties' son's education and extracurricular activities. This was a relatively new claim based upon the Supreme Court's authority to limit one parent's legal custody. *Rivero v. Rivero*, 125 Nev. 410 (2009). As the Supreme

Court had not set forth a method to determine if and when there should be a limitation of legal custody, the Court and counsel utilized the “best interest” factors defined by statute.

In addition to the issues of school placement and a limitation of legal custody, this case also included a claim by Mother that Father should be held in contempt for various reasons.

Mother prevailed on all claims. Father appealed. On appeal, the Supreme Court reversed the order to show cause because Mother’s motion had been presented by way of a verification and not an independent affidavit setting forth each of the allegations of contempt. The rulings related to the child’s educational placement and the limitation of legal custody were upheld.

This case was interesting because it was one of the early cases presented in Washoe County limiting a parent’s legal custody and because it altered our standards of practice related to Orders to Show Cause.

Sadly, the battle for custody of the parties’ son has continued. For the last ten months, the parties have once again been engaged in legal proceedings related to where their son will attend high school. The Court has been presented with issues of parental alienation claims from one parent and failure to bond from the other.

This case represents the quandary the Family Court is faced with. Unlike other civil actions where *res judicata* would negate the ability for continued litigation, issues related to children, whose needs change over time, leaves litigates open to on-going legal battles, even after rulings by the Court have been confirmed by the Nevada Supreme Court.

**d. your role in the case.**

Post decree counsel for Mother in both the district and appellate court. I continue to represent Mother.

**Case Number 3:**

**a. case name and date:**

Norman Davis, Petitioner v. Hope Davis, Respondent

2011 – Present



**b. court and presiding judge and all counsel:**

Court: Family Division, Second Judicial District Court

Judges: The Honorable Linda M. Gardner  
The Honorable David Humke

Counsel for Norman Davis: Ilin L. Rocovits  
Muriel Skelly  
Kelli Anne Vilorio

Counsel for Hope Davis: Sandra A. Unsworth

**c. the importance of each case to you and the impact of each case on you:**

I was initially retained related to a domestication of a California Divorce Decree in April 2011. This has been the most highly contested divorce action I have ever been involved in. At the time of the domestication, Mother had sole legal custody of the children and Father had limited visitation rights to his then four minor children, based upon a joint petition for divorce in California. Over time, Father was granted joint legal custody and a defined visitation schedule. After Father had been granted a defined visitation schedule, he suffered a catastrophic illness. He was placed in a medically induced coma; he lost both of his legs above the knee, and he had other complications related to this illness. During Father's recovery, Mother was given very little information related to his health. The Court had to weigh Father's right to medical privacy with Mother's right to know if Father was medically able to provide care for his children. But these parties' issues did not stop there.

In the summer of 2016, after the parties' oldest child obtained the age of 18, the three younger children decided they no longer wanted to spend time with Father. For the past three years, Counsel and the Court have had to work hard to try to determine what visitation Father should have with his children.

This case has impacted me in a number of ways, to include the following:

- Assisting the client in offering visitation for Father with the minor children while he was still in an infectious disease ward of a hospital. We had to take it on faith from the doctors that the children were safe, without having any real information as to why Father was in an infectious disease ward.
- Assisting the client in working on a parenting plan with a parent whom she is truly afraid of. There had been several instances of domestic abuse in the parties' relationship and Mother had to learn to let go of her fears enough to allow Father custodial time with the children.

- Assisting a client related to her children's rebellion from having contact with Father. This last struggle has seen the parties go from using one counselor to assist with a myriad of issues to the employment of a Parenting Coordinator, to assist the parties in communication; a Parent Reunification Therapist, to assist Father's desire to re-establish a relationship with one of the three children totally estranged from him; separate counselors for the three remaining minor children; and the parties' individual counselors.
- Finally, the role of counsel in assisting a client whose spouse or former spouse is in a far superior financial position.

**d. your role in the case.**

Counsel for Mother.

**Case Number 4:**

**a. case name and date:**

Veronica Huh, Plaintiff v. Young B. Huh, Defendant

2014 – 2015

**b. court and presiding judge and all counsel:**

Court: Family Division, Second Judicial District Court

Judge: The Honorable Frances M. Doherty

Counsel for Veronica Huh: Shawn B Meador

Counsel for Young B. Huh: Raymond E. Oster

Guardian Ad Litem for the Huh Children: Sandra A. Unsworth

**c. the importance of each case to you and the impact of each case on you:**

I was appointed the Guardian Ad Litem of the parties' two minor daughters, then 15 and 11 years old, in August 2014. This case had a very interesting fact pattern, as the parties had purchased a home in Reno, Nevada in order to have their children attend the Davidson Academy. Father continued to live and work in another state, travelling a significant distance to Nevada a couple of weekends per month to spend time with the family. Mother resided with the children in Nevada during the school year but returned to the marital home for long school breaks and summer. At the time of my appointment, it had been decided that the only issue Nevada would

decide was custody. Child support and all other issues related to the parties' marriage were to be decided by another state.

The parties were both the children of immigrants from Korea. They maintained a very traditional Korean home, wherein Father was tasked with earning money and providing financial security and Mother was tasked with raising the children and caring for the home. At the time of the divorce, the children were not well bonded with their Father and would have denied that their Father loved them. Father did love his children but had no skills or ability to show the children this love. With the aid of a counselor for Father and the children, I was able to recommend to the Court a visitation / contact schedule for Father and the children that was acceptable to both Father and Mother. Sadly, I have learned after the decision that Father was unable to make the changes necessary in his rigid parenting style to implement the plan; and he remains disconnected from his children, however, I was pleased to have attempted to assist this family.

**d. your role in the case.**

Court appointed Guardian Ad Litem for the minor children.

**Case Number 5:**

**a. case name and date:**

Robert W. Gordon, Plaintiff v. Katherine Alison Gordon, Defendant

2014 - Present

**b. court and presiding judge and all counsel:**

Court: First Judicial District Court

Judge: The Honorable James E. Wilson, Jr.

Counsel for Robert W. Gordon:

Trial Counsel:

Nicholus C. Palmer

Appellate Counsel:

Mark Forsberg

Counsel for Katherine Alison Gordon:

Sandra A. Unsworth

**c. the importance of each case to you and the impact of each case on you:**

On the date of trial, November 16, 2016, the parties had been married 36 years. Husband was 88 years old and Wife was 72 years old. This divorce action was Husband's third filing for divorce in as many years. I represented Wife in all three

actions. Wife had never filed a counterclaim. In addition to filing the dissolution actions, Husband had called the police related to a domestic violence claim and Wife had been arrested. I represented Wife in the criminal proceedings and obtained a dismissal of charges. When the first divorce proceeding was filed, the parties agreed upon a distribution of their marital estate. Thereafter they attempted a reconciliation, and the first divorce action was dismissed by stipulation. After the second divorce action was filed, the parties again agreed to the same distribution of their marital estate; however, prior to the Court accepting a settlement, the parties had to undergo competency evaluations. It was determined that Husband was not competent, so the parties again stipulated to dismiss the divorce. Then Husband filed a third divorce in Washoe County, but Wife demanded the matter return to the First Judicial District Court, where Husband presented a second evaluation stating he was competent. However, in this third action, Husband wanted a different distribution of the marital estate, as he had been disposing of his share of the marital estate at an alarming rate. At trial, neither party could present documentary evidence as to the original sources of funding for various accounts due to the passage of time; the parties could not clearly recall events from the beginning of their marriage; neither party could hear, and Husband could not see. The District Court held the parties to their agreed upon distribution of assets from the first filing and granted them a decree of divorce.

Husband appealed the decision and the matter was resolved at a settlement conference, with a Supreme Court settlement judge in the summer of 2017. The settlement granted to Husband alimony based upon Wife's inherited estate.

This case has made an impression on me as being one of the saddest cases I have ever been involved in. Although divorced, the parties continue to see each other regularly. Both parties have significant health issues and neither party has a close relationship with extended family. The parties never had children. I am proud of the assistance I have been able to provide Wife because I have been able to protect her share of the marital estate, ensuring she will have the benefit of a lifetime of investing for her old age.

**d. your role in the case.**

Counsel for Wife.

**21. Do you now serve or have you previously served as a mediator, an arbitrator, a part-time or full-time judicial officer, or a quasi-judicial officer? To the extent possible, explain each experience.**

I have never served officially in any of the listed capacities. However, I previously sat *pro tempore* for several of the Reno Municipal Court Judges at random times in the late 1990s. In this capacity, I would preside over criminal arraignments and misdemeanor trials on cases from dog barking to domestic battery to driving while intoxicated.

I have been appointed as a Special Master in the capacity of parenting coordinator in a few cases. In this capacity, I have helped parents learn to better communicate and co-parent for the benefit of their children.

Over the years, I have had the honor to be appointed by the Family Court bench of the Second Judicial District Court in the “special master” role of Guardian Ad Litem. In this capacity, I have investigated and tendered recommendations to the presiding judge related to custody and visitation of children in contested matters. I have appreciated these appointments and found the work to be rewarding.

I am currently appointed as the GAL in a complex guardianship case in Carson City. In this role, the District Court has called upon me to extend additional services to the guardian because of a transfer of guardianship from a grandmother to a step-sister of the protected minors.

In the role of Guardian Ad Litem, I have been the guardian of the best interest of infants, toddlers, young children and teenagers. Each child has had his/her own special needs related to what custodial arrangement would be in his/her best interest. Each age group has offered special challenges in discovering what each child needs and wants, and each age group requires a different balance between the competing concept of needs and wants.

My first such appointment was over 20 years ago, and each new appointment presents a unique challenge.

**22. Describe any pro bono or public interest work as an attorney.**

At times, I feel a majority of my practice has involved providing legal services at a reduced rate. I generally have multiple active cases where I perform services for clients at a reduced rate. I make it my practice to provide active military and some retired military personnel services at a reduced rate. I take several new cases every year where the client pays for services at a rate that he or she can afford.

At the 2019 Family Law Conference, Washoe Legal Services was attempting to place a large number of pro bono cases. I accepted a NRS 432B case. I represent two young children in foster care in their dependency matter, as well as in the companion termination of parental rights case.

In July 2019, Washoe Legal Services was seeking a Guardian Ad Litem for a nine-year-old child related to a post-divorce relocation request. The hearing on mother’s motion to relocate was scheduled for three weeks after my appointment. This case alone has already resulted in 20-25 hours of pro bono work.

In the last three calendar years, I have frequently volunteered for the Lawyer in the Library program for the Second Judicial District Court.

**23. List all bar associations and professional societies of which you are or have been a member. Give titles and dates of offices held. List chairs or committees in such groups you believe to be of significance. Exclude information regarding your political affiliation.**

State Bar of Nevada, member.  
Washoe County Bar Association, member.  
Norther Nevada Women Lawyers, member.  
Family Law Section, member.

**24. List all courses, seminars, or institutes you have attended relating to continuing legal education during the past 5 years. Are you in compliance with the continuing legal education requirements applicable to you as a lawyer or judge?**

I am in compliance with the applicable continuing legal education requirements in Nevada.

Over the past 5 years I have attended the following courses:

April 4, 2019	Tax Season 2019: Tips, Traps and Updates for 2018 Returns
February 27, 2019	Family Law Conference
March 1, 2018	Family Law Conference
November 16, 2017	Ethics in Jeopardy: Lawyer Gaffes and Mishaps
November 16, 2017	Trust Account Best Practices
November 10, 2017	Pathogenic Parenting and Reunification: A Two Part Puzzle with Solutions
November 10, 2017	Hot Topics for Small and Solo Practitioner
November 9, 2017	Advanced Family Law 2016
January 31, 2017	Constitutional Law with Professor Chemerinsky
January 31, 2017	Ethics of Marketing, Social Media and Creating an Online Presence
October 20, 2016	Bench / Bar Meeting
March 3, 2016	Family Law Conference
February 29, 2016	Constitutional Law with Professor Chemerinsky 2015
February 29, 2016	2015 Legislative Update: Criminal Law
September 3, 2015	Practicing Family Law: Avoiding Malpractice
December 31, 2014	The Anatomy of a DUI Case
December 31, 2014	Ten Social Media Myths for Attorneys
December 31, 2014	Sharepoint: Legal Discovery & Date Storage Issues
December 31, 2014	Practical Ethics: Avoiding Trouble with Clients, Courts and the Statutes

December 31, 2014 Take Five: Edifying and Educational Ethical Examples  
December 17, 2014 The Limitations of Persuasion: Know Them & Use Them  
December 17, 2014 How to Prepare Your Client for Deposition  
December 16, 2014 Client Intake, Damages & Expert Witnesses  
December 8, 2014 IP Basics for Transactional Attorneys  
December 4, 2014 A Legal Primer for Nonprofit Law  
June 17, 2014 Women in the Law Conference

**25. Do you have Professional Liability Insurance or do you work for a governmental agency?**

I carry Professional Liability Insurance.

**Business and Occupational Experience**

**26. Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business, or profession other than a judicial officer or the practice of law? If yes, please list, including the dates of your involvement with the occupation, business, or profession.**

I have worked for my family's businesses since high school. My parents ran coin operated car washes, and I would clean and service the various locations with my brothers in high school and college. During college, my mother owned a yarn shop called the Knit Wit. I worked there when I was not in school until the business closed. I have kept books for my father's electrical company, Unzy Electric since college and still assist him with this work. Other than these jobs, I had a few jobs working as a waitress or hostess in various restaurants in college. Law is the only profession in which I have worked.

**27. Do you currently serve or have you in the past served as a manager, officer, or director of any business enterprise, including a law practice? If so, please provide details as to:**

I have been a solo practitioner from 1992 to 1993 and from 1994 to present.

**a. the nature of the business:**

Solo legal practice.

**b. the nature of your duties:**

Every aspect of running a law practice, to include, but not limited to, legal work, client management, bookkeeping, billing, purchasing supplies, hiring of staff, selecting equipment and programs, and taking out the trash.

**c. the extent of your involvement in the administration or management of the business:**

I am responsible for the entire administration and management of my office.

**d. the terms of your service:**

I work for myself, so I have a very demanding task master.

**e. the percentage of your ownership:**

100%.

**28. List experience as an executor, trustee, or in any other fiduciary capacity. Give name, address, position title, nature of your duties, terms of service and, if any, the percentage of your ownership.**

I acted in the role of guardian of the person and the estate of my brother, Alan Robert Unsworth, from October 17, 1986, until his death in January 2015. Second Judicial District Court, Case No. PR86-7974. In the capacity of his guardian, I was a party to his divorce in 1987, this was my first family law case. Second Judicial District Court, Case No. 86-6905. My brother was fortunate that he was injured on the job and received state and federal benefits. My family and I were able to maintain my brother in his own home from 1986 until 2015. I managed his health care, his home and his estate.

**Civic, Professional and Community Involvement**

**29. Have you ever held an elective or appointive public office in this or any other state? Have you been a candidate for such an office? If so, give details, including the offices involved, whether initially appointed or elected, and the length of service. Exclude political affiliation.**

No.

**30. State significant activities in which you have taken part, giving dates and offices or leadership positions.**

None.

**31. Describe any courses taught at law schools or continuing education programs. Describe any lectures delivered at bar association conferences.**

Earlier in my career, I taught one or two continuing education programs. I also taught constitutional law classes at the police academy in the 90s. I have not retained the course information related to the program(s). I have not taught any courses in the last 20 years.



**32. List educational, military service, service to your country, charitable, fraternal and church activities you deem significant. Indicate leadership positions.**

None.

**33. List honors, prizes, awards, or other forms of recognition.**

Other than certificates for work in the Washoe County Lawyer in the Library project in 2017 and 2018, there are none of note.

**34. Have you at any time in the last 12 months belonged to, or do you currently belong to, any club or organization that in practice or policy restricts (or restricted during the time of your membership) its membership on the basis of race, religion, creed, national origin or sex? If so, detail the name and nature of the club(s) or organization(s), relevant policies and practices, and whether you intend to continue as a member if you are selected for this vacancy.**

No.

**35. List books, articles, speeches and public statements published, or examples of opinions rendered, with citations and dates.**

None.

**36. During the past ten years, have you been registered to vote? Have you voted in the general elections held in those years?**

Yes. I am registered voter and have voted in each general election in the past 10 years.

**37. List avocational interests and hobbies.**

An avocation is an activity pursued when not at work for pleasure. I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I am very close to my parents. My father is 90 and still working as an electrical contractor. My 87-year-old mother and I take joy in cooking and entertaining. I play tennis and take all my lessons from my son.

**Conduct**

**38. Have you read the Nevada Code of Judicial Conduct and are you able to comply if appointed?**

Yes. I have read this code and I am able to comply with this code if appointed.

**39. Have you ever been convicted of or formally found to be in violation of federal, state or local law, ordinance or regulation? Provide details of circumstances, charges, and dispositions.**

No.

**40. Have you ever been sanctioned, disciplined, reprimanded, found to have breached an ethics rule or to have acted unprofessionally by any judicial or bar association discipline commission, other professional organization or administrative body or military tribunal? If yes, explain. If the disciplinary action is confidential, please respond to question 72.**

Yes. See answer to question 72.

**41. Have you ever been dropped, suspended, disqualified, expelled, dismissed from, or placed on probation at any college, university, professional school or law school for any reason including scholastic, criminal, or moral? If yes, explain.**

No.

**42. Have you ever been refused admission to or been released from any of the armed services for reasons other than honorable discharge? If yes, explain.**

No.

**43. Has a lien ever been asserted against you or any property of yours that was not discharged within 30 days? If yes, explain.**

No.

**44. Has any Bankruptcy Court in a case where you are or were the debtor, entered an order providing a creditor automatic relief from the bankruptcy stay (providing in rem relief) in any present or future bankruptcy case, related to property in which you have an interest?**

No.

**45. Are you aware of anything that may require you to recuse or disqualify yourself from hearing a case if you are appointed to serve as a member of the judiciary? If so, please describe the circumstances where you may be required to recuse or disqualify yourself.**

Yes. I have lived in Northern Nevada my entire life. I have practiced law in Northern Nevada my entire career. As such there will inevitably be times when a person known to me will appear before my court as a litigant, witness, or person ancillary to a preceding, thus creating a basis for me to recuse or disqualify myself.

**Other**

- 46. If you have previously submitted a questionnaire or Application to this or any other judicial nominating commission, please provide the name of the commission, the approximate date(s) of submission, and the result.**

On or about January 30, 2018, I filed for appointment by the Second Judicial District Court to the position of juvenile master. After interviews, I was advised by the Chief Judge that I was too qualified for the position and the master's position was awarded to another attorney.

On or about November 19, 2018, I filed for appointment by the Second Judicial District Court for the position of domestic master. After interviews, I was advised by the Chief Judge that the court had decided not to fill the position.

On or about March 6, 2019, I filed for appointment to the Second Judicial District Court, Family Division, Department 14. I appeared before the Judicial Selection Commission on April 17, 2019 and was selected as one of the three names to be submitted to Governor Sisolak for the appointment. Governor Sisolak selected another candidate.

- 47. In no more than three pages (double spaced) attached to this Application, provide a statement describing what you believe sets you apart from your peers, and explains what particular education, experience, personality or character traits you possess or have acquired that you feel qualify you as a good district court judge. In so doing, address both the civil (including family law matters) and criminal processes (including criminal sentencing.)**

Please see attached.

- 48. Detail any further information relative to your judicial candidacy that you desire to call to the attention of the members of the Commission on Judicial Selection.**

I am prepared to run a campaign to retain this position if I am fortunate enough to receive this appointment. It is my intention to run for a family court position in 2020. I have already retained a campaign manager for the 2020 election cycle, and I have lined up supporters and funding to mount the necessary campaign.

- 49. Attach a sample of no more than 10 pages of your original writing in the form of a decision, "points and authorities," or appellate brief generated within the past 5 years, which demonstrates your ability to write in a logical, cohesive, concise, organized, and persuasive fashion.**

See attached.

**Attachment A**  
**Employment History**

**Please start with your current employment or most recent employment, self-employment, and periods of unemployment for the last 20 years preceding the filing of this Application.**

**Current or Last Employer:** Law Office of Sandra A. Unsworth

**Phone Number:** 775.324.1550

**Address:** 202 California Avenue, Reno, Nevada 89509

**From:** 1994

**To:** Present

**Supervisor's Name:** None

**Supervisor's Job Title:** Not Applicable

**Your Title:** Attorney at Law

**Specific Duties:** I run a solo practice of law. As such, I am responsible for all aspects of running my practice. I am responsible for every aspect of a client's case; for the running and management of my office; and for all issues related to support staff. In my practice, I regularly draft pleadings, initiate new legal actions and appear in court for hearings, settlement conferences and trials. Thereafter, I regularly draft orders that are the result of hearings and trials.

**Reason for Leaving:** Not applicable.

**Attachment  
Question 47**

**47. In no more than three pages (double spaced) attached to this Application, provide a statement describing what you believe sets you apart from your peers, and explains what particular education, experience, personality or character traits you possess or have acquired that you feel qualify you as a good district court judge. In so doing, address both the civil (including family law matters) and criminal processes (including criminal sentencing.)**

## **Personal Statement of Sandra Ann Unsworth**

### **Introduction**

*Family.*

The word is intimate and expansive, incorporating some of our most essential personal ties and the larger communities those ties help to build. At their best, families provide safety, support and nurturing — like my parents' 66-year marriage or my relationships with my son and brothers, one of whom is deceased. At other times, families engender disputes that must be settled by the legal system — like my own divorce after 24 years of marriage. Families, however they are constituted, fundamentally contribute to our sense of who we are as individuals and as a community.

Because of this social centrality, because of my own experience of family and because legal proceedings involving family matters so deeply affect the parties and their children, I decided to focus my practice on family law 25 years ago, near the beginning of my career. Since then, I have combined passion with dispassion, understanding the distinctive emotionality of family law matters, while also providing my clients with ethical, prudent, and reasoned representation in their best interest, even when they cannot initially see that interest.

Today, I offer my passion and my longtime legal skills and experience as I seek a new avenue to serve families and the law with this application for the open judicial seat in the Family Division of the Second Judicial District Court of Washoe County. Family legal proceedings are not bloodless. They are frequently emotion-laden and disputatious, requiring sure, perceptive and even-handed judicial oversight. Family courts help to maintain the fabric of a community, even when adjudication results in families taking a different form. Family courts help to protect the

vulnerable. Family courts, at their best, recognize the tremendous responsibility that comes with rendering decisions about people's personal ties. It would be an honor to serve.

### **Professional Qualifications for Appointment**

I believe the depth and breadth of my experience in criminal and civil proceedings, especially in all areas of family law practice, distinctly qualifies me for appointment. Indeed, I am among a handful of attorneys in Northern Nevada with such a lengthy and thorough grounding in all aspects of family law practice.

After graduating from the University of Nevada, Reno, and the University of Puget Sound School of Law (now Seattle University School of Law), I returned to my native Nevada and my hometown of Reno in 1986 to work as a law clerk for the Honorable Phyllis Halsey Atkins, the first female federal magistrate in Nevada.

After my clerkship, I joined the Criminal Division of the Washoe County District Attorney's office as a deputy district attorney learning evidence, how to evaluate cases, to prepare witnesses, to assist with processing major crime scenes, and to try cases. By the time I left the District Attorney's office in 1992, I had tried 18 jury trials and was prosecuting the majority of the child and adult sexual abuse cases in the county, cases that required me to deftly weigh the impact of the prosecution on the victims of violent and horrific crimes.

These criminal matters often had companion cases that fell under the purview of the family court, showing me that litigants needed compassionate, skilled and vigorous representation in family law matters. In 1994, when I established my own law office, these cases helped inform my decision to devote, from the outset, a significant portion of my practice to family law. Over the years, family law and its intersection with law enforcement and social services has grown to encompass about 95 percent of the matters I handle.

In the last two years, I have represented clients in every type of case but one that the family court oversees: divorce, paternity, juvenile delinquency, juvenile dependency, adoption, termination, child support, and minor and adult guardianship. During this period, no client has been involuntarily committed, but several have been assessed for commitment.

The family courts have recognized my expertise, appointing me on numerous occasions as a special master in the role of parenting coordinator or guardian ad litem to protect the best interests of children. These appointments have involved work as a parenting coordinator to teach parents better communication and parenting skills, and work as a guardian ad litem to provide the court with reports and recommendations that give children a voice related to child custody and visitation in contested matters.

In 2017, I was sent a solicitation letter asking me to purchase a plaque commemorating my being an attorney for 30 years. I was stunned: how had time passed so quickly? The letter caused me to reflect on my career and to search out the areas of my practice that I most enjoyed. During this period of self-reflection, I realized that my love of my own family had molded my practice. As a family law attorney and, if I am fortunate enough to be appointed as a family court judge, the interests of justice are best served when the interests of children are best served.

While not all cases involve children, I believe my experience and background give me the perspective to act in every capacity the Court may need from me. I pride myself on being able to present difficult cases in contested proceedings while still maintaining a respectful and a friendly attitude toward the bench, opposing counsel and all parties. My years of practice in giving clients bad news while offering solutions has allowed my clients to be heard and respected during a stressful period in their lives.

I thank the commission for its consideration.



**Attachment  
Question 49**

- 49. Attach a sample of no more than 10 pages of your original writing in the form of a decision, “points and authorities,” or appellate brief generated within the past 5 years, which demonstrates your ability to write in a logical, cohesive, concise, organized, and persuasive fashion.**

1 Code: 2490  
2 Sandra A. Unsworth  
3 State Bar No. 2877  
4 202 California Avenue  
5 Reno, Nevada 89509  
6 Telephone: 775.324.1550  
7 Facsimile: 775.324.3512  
8 Attorney for Sean Roston

6 IN THE FAMILY DIVISION  
7  
8 OF THE SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA  
9  
10 IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF WASHOE

11 \*\*\*\*\*

12 SEAN ROSTON,

13 Petitioner,

Case No. FV07-01210

14 vs.

Dept. No. 5

15 MISTY MCCLLOUD,

16 Respondent.

17 **MOTION FOR AUTHORIZATION FOR MINOR CHILD TO TRAVEL OUT OF THE**  
18 **COUNTRY AND TO OBTAIN PASSPORT FOR MINOR CHILD**

19 COMES NOW, Petitioner, SEAN ROSTON, by and through his attorney of record,  
20 Sandra A. Unsworth, and does hereby move this Honorable Court for an order authorizing him  
21 to allow the parties' minor child, Eli Roston, born January 8, 2006, to travel out of the country  
22 on a school trip, and thus authorization to obtain a passport for the minor child.

23 ///

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27

28

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This motion is made and based upon the Verification of Petitioner, SEAN ROSTON, attached hereto as Exhibit 1, the following Points and Authorities, and all the papers, documents and pleadings on file herein.

DATED this 8<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2018.

/ s / Sandra Unsworth  
Sandra A. Unsworth  
Attorney for Sean Roston

**POINTS AND AUTHORITIES**

**Procedural Background**

1  
2  
3 The parties are the parents of Eli Roston, born January 8, 2006. Eli will be twelve years  
4 old on January 8<sup>th</sup> of this year.

5 This has been a contentious case. The procedural highlights are as follows:

6  
7 September 2007: The parties were initially granted joint legal and physical custody of  
8 Eli. This agreement was ratified by the Court in its order filed on February 10, 2008; Eli was  
9 two (2) years old.

10 July 17, 2008: Respondent, MISTY MCCLOUD, hereinafter referred to as Ms.  
11 MCCLOUD, filed the first of a series of Motions.<sup>1</sup>

12 August, 8, 2008: Mr. ROSTON filed a Motion to Modify Custody and Child Support.  
13 This motion was based upon assertions that Ms. MCCLOUD was unstable and had relocated to  
14 Texas. The Court ordered a hearing on this motion.

15  
16 On January 12, 2009, after the parties stipulated to continue the hearing on Mr.  
17 ROSTON'S Motion to Modify, the Court issued an order wherein the Court stated:

18 The parties are admonished to put aside their personal differences and cooperate  
19 for their child's best interest.

20 On January 30<sup>th</sup> and February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009, nine years ago, the Court held a two (2) day  
21 contested hearing on Mr. ROSTON'S Motion to Modify Custody. In an Interim Order  
22 Modifying Physical Custody, filed on February 20, 2009, the Court confirmed the parties'  
23  
24

25  
26 <sup>1</sup> See: Motion for Order to Show Cause filed on September 19, 2008, asserting that Mr. ROSTON had violated  
27 the Court's order by removing Eli from the jurisdiction of the Court by taking the child to Carson City. Motion  
28 for Order to Show Cause filed on September 26, 2008, asserting a violation of the Court's order by Mr. ROSTON  
allowing his mother to take Eli to California with Ms. MCCLOUD'S permission. Motion for Reimbursement of  
Health Care Costs, filed on October 17, 2008. This was followed by another Ex Parte Emergency Motion, filed  
on October 28, 2008. On November 21, 2008, Ms. MCCLOUD filed a Motion for Order to Show Cause.

1 shared joint legal custody of Eli. Mr. ROSTON was awarded primary physical custody of Eli;  
2 with Ms. MCCLOUD being awarded defined visitation.

3 The Interim Order was fleshed out in an Order Modifying Physical Custody, filed on  
4 April 27, 2009. This Order set forth the legal basis for changing the parties from sharing joint  
5 physical custody to Mr. ROSTON having primary physical custody. Among the findings the  
6 Court found Ms. MCCLOUD has a learning disability causing the Court to have concerns about  
7 Ms. MCCLOUD being able to meet “the developmental and emotional needs” of Eli.  
8

9 Following this order, the Court was presented with a series of motions related to Ms.  
10 MCCLOUD’S visitation. At one point Ms. MCCLOUD’S visitation with Eli was suspended  
11 based upon a CPS investigation instituted by the child’s pediatrician. After a hearing the Court  
12 ordered that Ms. MCCLOUD’S visitation was to be limited to supervised visitation.  
13

14 By December 13, 2011, Ms. MCCLOUD filed yet another motion, this time to reinstate  
15 unsupervised visitation, based upon Ms. MCCLOUD succeeding on an appeal of the CPS case.  
16 The Court granted a review hearing on June 6, 2012.

17 The order after this hearing was filed on December 27, 2012. See *Order Denying*  
18 *Motion to Lift Supervised Visitation and to Remove Geri Goddard, M.A., M.F.T. as Court*  
19 *Appointed Professional*. The Court found that Ms. MCCLOUD “**is disconnected in all**  
20 **important parental ways from her son, Eli Roston.**”  
21

22 In the summer of 2015 Mr. ROSTON brought a motion before the Court to allow Eli to  
23 attend the Ojai Valley School, a private boarding school located in Ojai, California. Efforts to  
24 negotiate an agreement to allow Eli to attend this private school had failed. The Court held a  
25 hearing on this motion on July 22, 2015. The Court received testimony from Geri Goddard that  
26 Ms. MCCLOUD remained disconnected from Eli; Ms. MCCLOUD testified she had only had  
27 seven (7) visits with Eli in the year prior to the hearing. The Order After Hearing, filed on  
28

1 August 13, 2015 found that “it would be in Eli’s best interest to attend the Ojai Valley School to  
2 meet his expanding needs.”

3 **Factual Background**

4 Eli has attend the Ojai Valley School since 2015. He has thrived at this school. Eli has  
5 just turned twelve years old and his attending the sixth grade. Eli has the opportunity to travel,  
6 with a small group of students and teachers from the school to Peru to hike the Inca Trail to  
7 Machu Picchu. In order to make this trek, Eli will need his passport. Ms. MCCLOUD has  
8 refused to sign the document necessary to allow Eli the right to take this once in a lifetime trip.  
9

10 Ms. MCCLOUD has asserted that it is not safe for Eli to travel to Peru. The last travel  
11 warning issued by the United States State Department for Peru was issued in February 2013.  
12 Eli will be traveling with a small group of students from his school, along with his teachers.  
13 The trip will be guided by *Inti Sun Trek*, a Peru Tour Operator that Specializes in a Variety of  
14 Small Group Treks.  
15

16 The danger level of this trek is far less than Eli just faced with the Thomas Fire, which  
17 completely surrounded Ojai, burnt down part of the Ojai Valley School and caused Eli’s school  
18 to be evacuated out of Ojai, California. Ms. MCCLOUD never reached out to Mr. ROSTEN,  
19 his father or Eli to ask how Eli was doing during this extremely dangerous and scary ordeal.  
20 Yet, Ms. MCCLOUD wants to deny Eli the opportunity to go on this school trip because of the  
21 danger involved.  
22

23 Ms. MCCLOUD has also stated she cannot agree to allowing Eli the right to make this  
24 trip as it has been hard enough to have him out of state going to school, she cannot bear to have  
25 him out of the country. This argument might be sound if Ms. MCCLOUD actually saw Eli and  
26 the trip would somehow interfere with her spending time with Eli. This is simply not the case.  
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When Eli was allowed to attend the Ojai Valley School, Ms. MCCLOUD’S child support obligation was reduced to zero “due to the costs for her to visit with the child in the boarding school in California.” Ms. MCCLOUD has not once visited with Eli in school. Nor did she take advantage of the school’s offer to facilitate telephonic and video conferencing contact with Eli.

Mr. ROSTON offered to take Ms. MCCLOUD with him when he went to see in Eli in Ojai. Ms. MCCLOUD flatly rejected this offer.

When Eli was in Reno over the summer of 2017, Ms. MCCLOUD did not make any time to see Eli and in fact cancelled the one visitation she had scheduled. Over Christmas Break this year, Ms. MCCLOUD did visit with Eli twice, once on December 28<sup>th</sup> for 90 minutes and again on December 30<sup>th</sup> for 90 minutes. These were the first visits Ms. MCCLOUD has had with Eli in the last eighteen or so months.

Eli has asked his mother to allow him to go on this trip. Eli’s passport must be obtained ASAP since the school will soon be purchasing tickets for the trip. Only a small number of students may attend the trip and Eli has secured one of the coveted spots. But Eli must have his passport to make the trip.

**LAW**

Legal custody involves having basic legal responsibility for a child and making major decisions regarding the child, including the child’s health, education, and religious upbringing. *Mack v. Ashlock*, 112 Nev. 1062, 921 P.2d 1258 (1996). Joint legal custody requires that the parents be able to cooperate, communicate, and compromise to act in the best interest of the child. See *Mosley v. Figliuzzi*, 113 Nev. 51, 930 P.2d 1110 (1997).

1 If the parents in a joint legal custody situation reach an impasse and are unable to agree  
2 on a decision, then the parties may appear before the court “on an equal footing” to have the  
3 court decide what is in the best interest of the child. *Mack*, 112 Nev. at 1067, 921 P.2d at 1262.

4 **ARGUMENT**

5  
6 Eli has the opportunity to travel to Peru over Spring Break with a small group of  
7 students from his school for a once in a life time experience of hiking the Inca Trail to Machu  
8 Picchu. Machu Picchu is an Incan citadel in the Andes Mountains, built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that  
9 has been abandoned, but possesses interesting architecture, which may play on astronomical  
10 alignments. Eli would be properly supervised and attended to during all phases of this trip.

11  
12 Sadly, Ms. MCCLOUD has refused, as Eli’s joint legal custodian, to give her consent  
13 and to allow Eli to obtain a passport. Ms. MCCLOUD remains disconnected from Eli, as  
14 evidenced by the fact that she has not taken the opportunity afforded to her by the suspension of  
15 her child support to go visit him at school; nor did she take the opportunity to ride with Mr.  
16 ROSTON to visit Eli in Ojai; nor did she take the opportunity to speak with Eli while he was at  
17 school; and nor did she take the opportunity to visit Eli when he has been in Reno for the year  
18 and half prior to this Christmas Break.

19  
20 Sadly, Ms. MCCLOUD has failed to heed the Court’s prior admonition to put Eli’s best  
21 interest first. Eli is twelve. He has the opportunity to spend his Spring Break hiking in Peru  
22 with the school. Eli did not spend Spring Break in 2016 or 2017 in Reno. There is no loss of  
23 “visitation” opportunity and there is little danger associated with this trip, yet Ms. MCCLOUD  
24 is refusing to allow Eli this opportunity.

25 **CONCLUSION**

26  
27 Based upon the aforementioned Points and Authorities, Mr. ROSTON requests the  
28 Court authorize Eli to travel outside of the country with the Ojai Valley School over Spring



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Break 2018 and that Ms. MCCLLOUD be required to timely execute any and all documents necessary to facilitate the child travelling outside of the country, specifically, to obtain a passport for the minor child.

WHEREFORE, Mr. ROSTON prays for judgment against Ms. MCCLLOUD as follows:

1. An order granting him authority to authorize Eli to travel outside of the country.
2. An order requiring Ms. MCCLLOUD to execute any and all documents to facilitate the child travelling outside of the country, to include documents to obtain a passport for the child. Further, Mr. ROSTON asks that the Court order Ms. MCCLLOUD sign the necessary document to allow Eli to obtain a passport within 72 hours from the date of this Court’s order.
3. Any other and further relief the Court deems proper and just in the premises.

DATED this 8<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2018.

          / s / Sandra Unsworth            
Sandra A. Unsworth  
Attorney for Sean Roston