

2022 Hamilton County City of East Ridge

Voter Guide

501(c)(3) - compliant and
nonpartisan

East Ridge Judge

County General Election | 8/4/2022



www.VoteChattanooga.org

**YOUR VOTE
MATTERS**

8/4/2022

Online Voter Registration/Record Updating available until 6/24/2022 at: <https://sos.tn.gov/elections>

Contact Church Voter Guides at: Info@VoteChattanooga.org | Updated 7/2/2022

For other Voter Guides and more information, please go to our website: www.VoteChattanooga.org

Church Voter Guides does not endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

The Voter Guide Information contained in this document is provided for informational purposes only. It was obtained directly from the candidates and other sources, and we have done our best to convey it to you accurately, but nothing herein has been "fact checked". Utilize this Voter Guide at your own discretion. We take no responsibility for the factual nature of the content, or for publishing errors, etc. To the best of our knowledge, this Voter Guide is 501(c)(3) and officially nonpartisan, and thereby it does not support or oppose any candidate.

Hamilton County 2022 City of East Ridge Voter Guide for East Ridge Judge

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Introduction to the Voter Guide

Church Voter Guides is an independent 501(c)(3) faith-based nonprofit organization. We serve the public by providing objective research and education on matters specifically of interest to Christians, primarily through the production and distribution of 501(c)(3)-compliant, nonpartisan voter guides.

Church Voter Guides does not endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

Church Voter Guides, a Chattanooga nonprofit, initially started in Colorado Springs in April of 2021. *This new Voter Guide for the 2022 City of East Ridge* is being distributed electronically only, both through our interactive website and by downloadable and printable PDF files. We have produced one Voter Guide for each seat that is: (1) conducting an election this year, and (2) for which at least one candidate in that election answered our Questionnaire. Our Voter Guides are being promoted through a wide-ranging network of area churches, faith-based non-profit organizations, mainstream and social media, and other means.

The purpose of our Voter Guides is to educate and inform voters of each candidate's positions on a variety of policy issues that they are likely to address if elected. As a Voter Guide designed to be distributed through Churches, we ask the candidates questions on topics that are of utmost interest to the Christian voter.

How to Get the Most Benefit from this Voter Guide

The core information in this Voter Guide comes directly from the County General Election candidates themselves. We asked them questions, they answered (with a 120 word limit), and we have published their responses here. In order to understand and utilize this information to the fullest, so that you may vote in the most informed way, we suggest the following:

1. Pray and ask the Almighty for discernment. The Kingdom of God is all about truth, while politics is a system fraught with compromise. Make sure you consider the candidates' answers with a Heavenly mindset.
2. Ask yourself, "Did the candidate actually answer the question, or rather side-step it, or give a fluff, wishy-washy, and/or 'political' type answer that leaves you not really knowing where he/she truly stands on the issue?"
3. Learn more about the candidates running for East Ridge Judge including their positions on issues we did not cover in our questionnaire, by visiting their official campaign websites (if they have one.) The website URL for each candidate is listed in the Voter Guide.
4. Educate yourself more about the Christian/Biblical perspective regarding many of the subjects covered in our Voter Guide by reading topical articles on our website: www.VoteChattanooga.org
5. Use search engines to find additional information about each candidate, including written articles and videos, other voter guides, and even voting records for those who have served in public office before. You may even want to watch online recordings of the local East Ridge Judge meetings to see how incumbents conduct themselves and vote.
6. Reach out to the candidates themselves through the provided email addresses and other means, in order to ask them questions of personal importance to you. Please make sure to show great respect toward each candidate and his/her time, especially to those with whom you disagree. Running for office is hard, stressful, time-consuming work, and these are your fellow citizens who have lives, families, jobs...and feelings (just like you!)

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What makes a Voter Guide 501 (c)(3) - Compliant and Nonpartisan?

Federal tax law permits nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations to develop and distribute materials about political candidates' positions on issues, in order to educate voters impartially and on a nonpartisan basis; meaning that it is free from party affiliation, bias, or designation. The IRS states that 501 (c)(3) organizations may conduct any range of activities to promote voter participation and educate voters so long as it is nonpartisan. But, 501(c)(3) organizations are explicitly prohibited from supporting or opposing candidates for public office.

Some of the activities 501(c)(3) nonprofits *MAY* perform: Conduct or promote voter registration; educate voters on the voting process; distribute nonpartisan sample ballots, candidate questionnaires, and **voter guides**; organize "get-out-the-vote" activities; encourage and help people to vote; educate the candidates on issues important to their organization; and continue to do issue advocacy during an election.

So, first and foremost: **Church Voter Guides** does **NOT** endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

Second, all of our staff and volunteers are required to act in a nonpartisan manner when working for or representing the organization and the creation of the Voter Guide.

Third, we do not edit, revise, or editorialize candidate responses to our Questionnaire. We do not even correct typos. **Candidate answers are published verbatim**, ensuring that their responses accurately represent their positions and perspectives on these issues. We then simply share this information through the Voter Guide, and you decide whom you believe to be the best candidate.

To be fair and impartial, we reached out by email, text, and phone when determined necessary, to all registered candidates running for East Ridge Judge throughout Hamilton County for their 2022 elections, inviting them to answer our questionnaire. Candidate information is presented in alphabetical order by **last name**. If a Candidate did not respond at all, or did not choose to participate, or did not choose to respond to certain answers in the questionnaire, then it is noted where applicable. If there were not enough candidates running, then we did not produce a Voter Guide for that seat.

**Join Our Growing Grassroots Coalition of Citizens, Churches/Nonprofit Organizations,
and Media Partners Committed to Promoting the Voter Guide throughout Our Region**

Let's get the word out!

It's simple. Just share our website URL all around the Hamilton County region: www.VoteChattanooga.org

Tell your friends and neighbors, post on social media, and ask your Pastors to promote it to your congregation (we'll even provide you /them with the announcement info and the slide deck.)

Please contact us for any reason, we'd love to collaborate with you: Info@VoteChattanooga.org

The "Small Print": The information contained in this document is being provided for informational purposes only. It was obtained directly from candidates and other sources, and we have done our best to convey it to you accurately, but nothing herein has been "fact checked". Utilize this Voter Guide at your own discretion. We take no responsibility for the factual nature of the content, or for publishing errors, etc. To the best of our knowledge, this Voter Guide is 501(c)(3)-compliant and officially nonpartisan, and thereby it does not support or oppose any candidate

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Judge | Survey Question Index

- 1) **Purpose of Judges:** What do you view as the purpose and role of Judges?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a Judge?
- 3) **Moral Values:** Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why or why not?
- 4) **Interaction with Personalities:** How do you deal with difficult people, including peers, lawyers, their clients or litigants?
- 5) **Legal Interpretation:** How would you interpret the Constitution and the laws of the State of Tennessee within your jurisdiction?
- 6) **Personal Challenges:** For new judges, what challenges do you think you might encounter as you transition from a role as advocate to a new role as a judge?
For incumbent judges, what have you learned during your term that will inform you going forward as a judge?
- 7) **Venue Challenges:** What challenges face the court you are running for, and how will you effectively overcome those challenges?
- 8) **Legal Representation:** If you observed a party in your courtroom being poorly represented by an unprepared or ineffective lawyer, how would you handle the situation?

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City of East Ridge Judge

(In alphabetical order)



TRACY COX



CHRIS DIXON



RICH HEINSMAN



KEVIN B. WILSON

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TRACY COX

Candidate Information

Email Address:	Tracy@tracycoxlaw.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Attorney
Resident of Hamilton County:	33 years, Born in Chattanooga. Lived in Germany (father was stationed there.) College and law school in Knoxville. Then Asheville, NC. Then Maryville. Returned in 2005.

1) Purpose of Judges: What do you view as the purpose and role of Judges?

A judge's role is to fairly and impartially listen to the evidence and apply the law.

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a Judge?

I have handled cases from both the defense and prosecutorial perspectives. I also have significant experience in cases involving children. I have been a judge before.

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3) Moral Values: Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why or why not?

Judges take an oath to uphold the laws enacted by legislature and enforce the laws as implemented by legislation. Judges do not make the laws. While my answer may be brief, judges are held to a very strict code as to what we are allowed to say.

4) Interaction with Personalities: How do you deal with difficult people, including peers, lawyers, their clients or litigants?

With a strong judicial temperament that maintains patience yet firmness with all people that come before the court.

5) Legal Interpretation: How would you interpret the Constitution and the laws of the State of Tennessee within your jurisdiction?

I would enforce the laws as they are written and follow the guidance of higher courts following the constitution.

6) Personal Challenges: For new judges, what challenges do you think you might encounter as you transition from a role as advocate to a new role as a judge? For incumbent judges, what have you learned during your term that will inform you going forward as a judge?

While serving as a judge before, I learned to allow litigants to fully develop the issues before coming to a decision.

7) Venue Challenges: What challenges face the court you are running for, and how will you effectively overcome those challenges?

Advancing technology, increased volume of cases, and increase seriousness of cases are all natural challenges in growing communities. Hard work and diligence are the best way to tackle these challenges.

8) Legal Representation: If you observed a party in your courtroom being poorly represented by an unprepared or ineffective lawyer, how would you handle the situation?

Everyone is entitled to effective representation. I would take the necessary steps to protect the litigant's right to effective assistance of counsel.

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CHRIS DIXON

Candidate Information

Email Address: cdixonattorney@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation: Attorney
Resident of Hamilton County: 45 yrs

1) Purpose of Judges: What do you view as the purpose and role of Judges?

The purpose of a Judge in our court system is to make tough decisions based on the law and to rule according to the law even though that decision is not popular. Judges must have legal courage to follow the law despite bad press, or public outcry. A Judges decision has an effect on the lives of every American, including basic civil rights, religious freedoms, voting rights, affirmative action, and in some cases, life or death. They lead court proceedings, guided by established laws to determine sentencing, and rule on the constitutionality of various laws and legal precedents.

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a Judge?

During my 17 years of practice I have focused solely on Criminal Justice. During those years I have also sat as special judge in all 5 Hamilton County Session Courts under the current Judges, and I sat as special Judge for the five previous Hamilton Sessions Court Judges. I have also sat as special Judge in Red Bank, Soddy Daisy, Chattanooga City Court and East Ridge. I will be tough on crime and even tougher on injustice.

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3) Moral Values: Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why or why not?

Yes for the most part and No. (The Yes) The second set of Commandments deal with, no killing, no stealing, no adultery, no coveting and lying, our Criminal Justice system is based on those fundamental principles and ideals and should be followed and maintained. (The No) However the first five No other Gods, no graven images, taking the Lords name in vain, keep the Sabbath Holy, I DO NOT believe Government or the Courts should dictate who or when people should worship or how to worship. The Courts should protect individuals rights to practice as they choose.

4) Interaction with Personalities: How do you deal with difficult people, including peers, lawyers, their clients or litigants?

A Judge MUST display proper judicial temperament that is: patience (not trying to rush everything in order to go home), open-mindedness, courtesy, tact, courage, punctuality, firmness, understanding, compassion, humility and common sense. Those qualities MUST be demonstrated consistently. Even if you have a Defendant ranting and raving in Court, they must be treated respectfully, a Judge getting up set and yelling across the Court Room is not appropriate or professional. Cooler Heads Always Prevail.

5) Legal Interpretation: How would you interpret the Constitution and the laws of the State of Tennessee within your jurisdiction?

I am a strong believer in Legal "Courage" or "the willingness to do what the law requires the judge to do even though the course the judge must follow is not the popular one". "Integrity" is not being influenced by the identity, race, gender, political status, wealth or relationship of the party or lawyer before the judge. More basically it is not doing what the Judge knows to be wrong. I will follow the law as it is written and how it been interpreted by the other courts and listen to the arguments of counsel. I will not allow outside forces interfere with my decisions.

6) Personal Challenges: For new judges, what challenges do you think you might encounter as you transition from a role as advocate to a new role as a judge? For incumbent judges, what have you learned during your term that will inform you going forward as a judge?

Honestly, it is not natural to pass judgment on people every day. My problem will be using my own moral compass and the current law and ruling as to what the law is rather than what I think the law should be.

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7) Venue Challenges: What challenges face the court you are running for, and how will you effectively overcome those challenges?

East Ridge Court is considered a small Court, it needs to be modernized. A defendant should be able to go to a website to get their court dates instead of calling the court clerks. There should also be more rehabilitative services offered to Defendants that will cut down on repeat offenders and if those do not work then individuals will be banned from the City.

8) Legal Representation: If you observed a party in your courtroom being poorly represented by an unprepared or ineffective lawyer, how would you handle the situation?

As Judge, I would stop the proceedings and speak to the attorneys, if necessary I would reset the case or take the attorney off the case. As a Attorney, I have witnessed people being abused in court and I have stepped in to help them or I have stepped in to aid the attorney. I don't like bullies and I don't like seeing people run over by the system or its agents. People should leave Court feeling like they were given a fair opportunity to have their side heard. No one should ever leave the Court not understanding what happened.

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RICH HEINSMAN

Candidate Information

Email Address:	richheinsman@icloud.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Attorney
Resident of Hamilton County:	38
Campaign Website:	https://www.facebook.com/Rich-Heinsman-for-East-Ridge-Judge-107112492002941

1) Purpose of Judges: What do you view as the purpose and role of Judges?

To fairly resolve disputes consistent with existing law and precedent, while remaining flexible in extraordinary cases, but still neutral, fair, and courteous.

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a Judge?

Cases in East Ridge Court arise from municipal code violations, and violations of Tennessee law which range from speeding tickets to capital murder. As a hospitality business owner and former general contractor, I have citizen-level and professional-level experience with municipal codes, and as a senior constitutional lawyer, I have handled thousands of Tennessee Criminal Code violations of every kind including seven capital murder cases. I am especially concerned with access-to-justice issues, preservation of individual liberties, and strict judicial neutrality.

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3) Moral Values: Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why or why not?

Faith, freely-given, is superior to any government-mandated ritual or homage. The separation of church and state has proven a wise mechanism to both respect individual differences in civil life, and to protect individual faith and convictions.

4) Interaction with Personalities: How do you deal with difficult people, including peers, lawyers, their clients or litigants?

With patience, compassion, and a measured amount of discipline.

5) Legal Interpretation: How would you interpret the Constitution and the laws of the State of Tennessee within your jurisdiction?

Judges do not make law, that is the legislature's prerogative, but not every real-world situation can be anticipated in East Ridge, or Nashville, or Washington, so Judges must be keenly sensitive to not only the rights and interests of the citizens of East Ridge, but also to the rights and interests of the parties to a case.

6) Personal Challenges: For new judges, what challenges do you think you might encounter as you transition from a role as advocate to a new role as a judge? For incumbent judges, what have you learned during your term that will inform you going forward as a judge?

I have acted as special judge in East Ridge on several occasions, and it is a challenge to treat every individual fairly, because every case is different, and fairness is a moving target, but it is a lofty goal that I strive to achieve.

7) Venue Challenges: What challenges face the court you are running for, and how will you effectively overcome those challenges?

Border community faces special challenges including cross-border collections, and the frequency and potential unfairness to the parties and to the police of cross-border extradition, as well as other challenges. But there are solutions to these problems, including adjustment to bonding mechanisms and probationary conditions.

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8) Legal Representation: If you observed a party in your courtroom being poorly represented by an unprepared or ineffective lawyer, how would you handle the situation?

All lawyers share a professional duty to prevent the miscarriage of justice. Judges are in a unique position to step in and offer to appoint counsel if a private lawyer is remiss, or to substitute appointed counsel if the situation requires. However, the client/defendant has the right to have the lawyer of their choice or to represent themselves, so there are limitations to the court's authority to discharge or replace an ineffective attorney.

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KEVIN B. WILSON

Candidate Information

Email Address: kbwilson@kbwilsonlaw.com
Occupation/Vocation: Attorney/Judge
Resident of Hamilton County: 40

1) Purpose of Judges: What do you view as the purpose and role of Judges?

First is to adjudicate cases. Instill in people respect for the judicial system. Work with people who have situations which they can remedy (such as those without insurance, a driver's license, or registration) to enable them to obtain the required document. Reinforce responsibility for people to fulfill the requirements that they agree to in court or that are imposed on them by the Court. To interact cooperatively with the Prosecution, the Defense Bar and Public Defender, the Police Department, and the Clerk's office, to promote the efficient and fair administration of matters before the Court. Through all of this, the goal is to reduce crime and promote personal responsibility.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a Judge?

I have been a Judge for 32 years for the City of Collegedale. As a Judge it is my responsibility to also cover for other judges in Courts in Hamilton County. To assist, I sit regularly in General Sessions Court, Chattanooga City Court, and Red Bank City Court. Since August 1, 2021, I have sat as the City Court Judge for East Ridge after being appointed by the City Council to finish Judge Helton's term. Every year I attend two Conferences for the General Sessions Court Judges to stay up to date on the laws which we enforce and the cases which interpret those laws. As a Judge, I am continuously looking for ways to improve the function of the...

3) Moral Values: Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why or why not?

The 10 Commandments are the basis of the many of the Judeo-Christian religious principles and relevant as a basis for some of the laws we enforce. I am guided by the moral principles in the way I approach the responsibility of being a judge. Of the commandments "thou shalt not steal" is the one most often dealt with, although coveting is often a part of stealing. "Thou shalt not kill" comes up occasionally and "bearing false witness" (lying) unfortunately happens far too regularly and I deal promptly and sternly with it! We have laws in our State and City that address all three of those which we enforce. Since we all fall short of perfect behavior, I work with people...

4) Interaction with Personalities: How do you deal with difficult people, including peers, lawyers, their clients or litigants?

I deal with them often! Many times the first thing I do is have them sit back down in Court and cool off and watch for a while. Sometimes I need that break too. Not too often do I have lawyers that get out of hand but I did have one leave the courtroom in East Ridge not long ago because I felt he was being disrespectful. I get along with most people and don't mind having respectful discussions in Court where we disagree. However, when I am the Judge it falls on me to regulate the courtroom and what is said there and when necessary I make sure the people in front of me understand that. If people will...

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5) Legal Interpretation: How would you interpret the Constitution and the laws of the State of Tennessee within your jurisdiction?

That is way too broad of a question for me to answer fully here! Being a Court with general sessions court jurisdiction, we don't get into constitutional issues real often and we are not a court of record. But when we have contested hearings, the interpretation of a Tennessee law is frequently at issue and occasionally a Constitutional issue arises, most often 4th Amendment issues dealing with searches and seizures. Often, I open the Tennessee Code book to the law in question while we are having a hearing.

6) Personal Challenges: For new judges, what challenges do you think you might encounter as you transition from a role as advocate to a new role as a judge? For incumbent judges, what have you learned during your term that will inform you going forward as a judge?

Being a part-time judge and a practicing lawyer you deal with this every week. East Ridge only holds court once a week and I will be on the bench in Collegedale (and maybe downtown) every week. Constantly going from one role to the other, sometimes on the same day. That can be a challenge but it also keeps it fresh in your mind what it's like to be a lawyer in front of a judge. You don't get "robotic" where you forget what it's like to be a lawyer. I've been doing it for 32 years. I still love being a judge and look forward to new challenges because people are always changing.

7) Venue Challenges: What challenges face the court you are running for, and how will you effectively overcome those challenges?

Not an issue in our court.

8) Legal Representation: If you observed a party in your courtroom being poorly represented by an unprepared or ineffective lawyer, how would you handle the situation?

That's a tough one. Very difficult to determine that in the typical case in our court where a plea is agreed to between the parties. If it happened, I would probably point it out to the District Attorney or continue the case. It's not really my job to meddle in how they do their job unless it's an egregious case of poor representation.

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Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal grey ruling lines. A single vertical red line runs down the left side of the page, creating a margin. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.