

# Jefferson County judicial nominee faces allegations of mental illness

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A poster in Birmingham for Linda Hall. The attorney is running for a spot on Jefferson County's circuit court in the November election. (Ivana Hrynkiw | [ihrynkiw@al.com](mailto:ihrynkiw@al.com))



An Alabama Death Row inmate once challenged the mental health of an attorney who's now seeking election as a judge in Jefferson County. Among the claims made was that the lawyer once told people she had "supernatural powers" and frequently tried to ward off evil.

Court records filed in 2014 by an attorney for Randy Lewis-- a man awaiting execution for a 2007 capital murder conviction-- say he should have his conviction and sentence overturned because, among other things, Linda Hall was mentally ill at the time she represented Lewis during his trial. The appeal is ongoing.

Hall is currently the Democratic nominee for Jefferson County Circuit Court Place 16. She is running against Republican incumbent Circuit Judge Teresa Pulliam.

When contacted and provided a copy of the 2014 filing, Hall sent an email to AL.com stating: "This was all fabricated and sending to the press is just dirty politics." The Jefferson County Democratic Party chair said the group has never received any complaints against Hall, and that they support her as the party's nominee.

A Jefferson County judge assigned to the Lewis case never ruled on the claims of Hall's alleged mental illness, but rejected some motions by a defense attorney to get total access to Hall's health records. Lewis' appeal was transferred to a Tuscaloosa County judge several months ago after Hall became the nominee, and all Jefferson County judges recused themselves from the case.





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An evidentiary hearing is set for October 3 in that appeal, and at least four people who were mentioned in the filing as having witnessed Hall's mental illness have been subpoenaed to testify.

The 2014 filing, which cites attorneys and relatives by name as sources, states Hall began to stop taking care of herself in 1994 and appeared "almost homeless." That same year, the filing by Lewis' then-attorney claims, Hall developed a gambling addiction and spent time in a mental health facility.

"As the years passed, Ms. Hall's behavior became increasingly deranged, and her penchant for grandiosity more pronounced. Around 2000, she claimed supernatural powers, proposing on one occasion to conjure [her brother-in-law's] deceased father," the filing states.

Hall defended Lewis in 2007 with another lawyer, but she is the only one singled out on the grounds of a mental illness. She was appointed as the first-chair, or lead attorney, on the case.



In response to the claims that Hall was mentally ill and ineffectively represented Lewis, Assistant Alabama Attorney General Tina Coker Hammonds filed a response in 2014 saying Hall wasn't mentally ill at the time she represented Lewis, and the claims about her mental state throughout the years are irrelevant.

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"Even if Ms. Hall started wearing less fashionable clothing or legally gambled or made unfortunate real estate decisions or made unsuccessful attempts to be elected to public office, Lewis has failed to demonstrate how any of these facts are relevant to Hall's representation of Lewis. Lewis and Hall interacted and prepared for trial - and Hall participated in trial with co-counsel Erskine Mathis. Lewis's claims concerning Ms. Hall are without merit in this proceeding and he is not entitled to relief," the state's response says.

The filing by Lewis' attorney claims that during 2006 and 2007, when Hall should have been preparing for Lewis' capital murder trial, she became convinced her family members had put spells on her and her dead brother. Hall

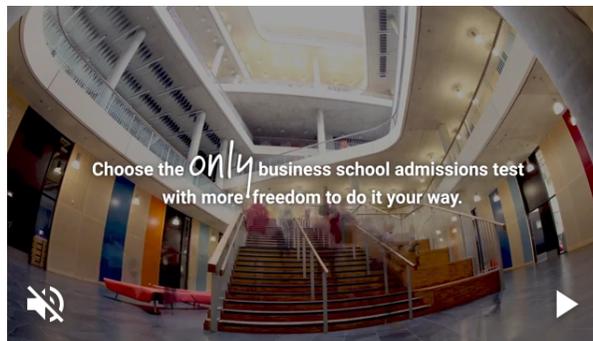


put talismans around her home and constructed an altar with candles, and also poured salt around her house to keep demons away, the filing claims.

The filing also states Hall was homeless, living in shelters and off charity assistance by 2010. She had been evicted from her home and all files pertaining to Lewis' case had been lost or destroyed. A Jefferson County sheriff's deputy spotted her wandering around Lakeshore Drive in heavy coats and looked "emaciated," the court filing states.

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A local attorney, who is named in the filing, once gave Hall a ride home and said that Halls' house was in disarray and her refrigerator doors were wide open; on another occasion, he found charms and boards with scripture covering the yard, and the bathtubs and sinks filled with water to ward off evil. Sprinklers were also running to flood the yard- again to ward off evil- according to the court filing.

Also in 2010, according to the document, Homewood police reported Hall crashed her car one morning around 2 a.m. and when officers found her inside the car, she was completely naked. The filing continues that Hall was



admitted to UAB Hospital where doctors recommended she be involuntarily committed, but her family didn't pursue commitment.

A Birmingham police report from 2011 called Hall a "mentally ill person" after she called police repeatedly about an intruder who wasn't actually there, the filing claims. The officer noted in his report that Hall's apartment contained a little food, a small table, and a piece of foam that was being used as a mattress, the court filing states.

The filing says a former Jefferson County judge, who is named in the filing, vowed to never again appoint Hall to a capital case, that she was "struggling," and the judge was only assigning her to "simple misdemeanor cases."

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The AG's filing also states, "Although Lewis's current counsel, and even the court, may disagree with the methods of trial counsel, '[i]t does not follow that any counsel who takes an approach we could not have chosen is guilty of rendering ineffective assistance. . . [n]or does that fact that a particular defense ultimately proved to be unsuccessful demonstrate ineffectiveness..'"



"Lewis raises mere conclusory allegations that fail to show the Petitioner is entitled to relief," the response says.

## **Residency**

More recently, a complaint was filed in court by a county voter. That complaint states Hall isn't eligible for the seat because Alabama law requires a judicial candidate to reside in the circuit they are competing in for at least 12 months prior to the election or appointment.

The voter's lawsuit, which was filed in Jefferson County Circuit Court, states Hall has lived in Shelby County-- which is not part of the Tenth Judicial Circuit-- for parts of the past 12 months and will not have lived in Jefferson County for a year by election day.

While Hall's name should not appear on the November 6 ballot, the complaint says, it would be impossible to print new ballots in time for the election. "Unfortunately, because Defendant Hall did not disclose her actual residence address in Shelby County, her ineligibility was not discovered in time to prevent her name from appearing on the general election ballots," it states.



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"As a result, the only remedy available is a preliminary and permanent injunction prohibiting the state and county officials... from counting any votes cast for Defendant Hall."

The complaint also says if Hall were to be elected, every order and sentence she imposes would be subject to appeal because of her ineligibility to serve as a county judge.

In court records, Hall "denies that she is not a resident of Jefferson County." She states that she has continuously resided at and does reside at a Valley Avenue address, which is an office building called Valley Centre.

Jefferson County judges have recused themselves from presiding over that lawsuit as well.

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