

1980 WL 120900 (S.C.A.G.)

Office of the Attorney General

State of South Carolina

September 30, 1980

*1 Mr. James F. Hendrix
State Training Coordinator
State Election Commission
Post Office Box 5987
Columbia, South Carolina 29250

Dear Mr. Hendrix:

This letter is in reference to my letter to you of September 24, 1980, concerning what names may be placed on the general election ballot.

In [Stevenson v. West](#), 270 S.C. 560, 243 S.E. 2d 445 (1978), the South Carolina Supreme Court stated that the opinion of the Court did not extend to the use of nicknames on the ballot and further that '[n]icknames, bearing no relationship to a person's given name, remain outside the scope of [Code Section 7-13-320](#).' (Emphasis added.) Further, the Court held that a derivative of a name may be used on the election ballot.

The [Oxford English Dictionary](#) (1961) defines the word 'derivative' as it is used in grammar to be 'a word derived from another by some process of word formation; any word which is not a primitive word or root.' The word 'diminutive' is defined as 'expressing diminution . . . usually applied to derivatives or affixes expressing something small of a kind denoted by the primitive word.' An illustrative example that follows states that Hecale is the diminutive of the name Hecale. [Webster's Third New International Dictionary](#), G. C. Merriam Company, 1976, gives as an example of a diminutive word the name Jeanie for the given name of Jean.

It would appear that in general all commonly accepted diminutives of given names would also be considered derivatives of those names. This would, therefore, clearly place diminutive names within the purview of the holding of [Stevenson, supra](#).

[Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary](#), G. C. Merriam Company, at page 1178 lists several common English given names and their diminutive names. This book listed Ernie as a diminutive of Ernest, Hal as a diminutive of Henry, Jack as a diminutive of John, Jake as a diminutive of Jacob, Mikey and Mike as a diminutive of Michael, and, Fritz as a diminutive of Frederick.

Therefore, it would appear that a diminutive name is equivalent to a derivative name and is not a nickname wholly unrelated to the given names. These diminutive or derivative names may be placed on the general election ballot.

In your recent letter to me you requested advice as to whether or not Senator Hollings may be placed on the ballot as Ernest Fritz Hollings and if Mr. Ravenel may be placed on the ballot as Charles D. Pug Ravenel. In view of the information set out in this letter, 'Fritz' is a diminutive of the given name 'Frederick' and may be placed on the ballot. The name 'Fug' is not a diminutive or a derivative of either 'Charles' or 'DuFort' and, therefore, would still be considered a nickname and outside the scope of the [Stevenson](#) case.

Very truly yours,

Treva G. Ashworth

Senior Assistant Attorney General

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