

News Roundup

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The [Atlantic](#) reports that people attending Supreme Court oral arguments on Monday were “gobsmacked” when Justice Clarence Thomas asked a government attorney a question from the bench. It’s been ten years since Thomas last asked a question in court. The article suggests that Thomas’s broken silence is “powerful evidence” that the court has changed since Justice Scalia’s death a few weeks ago, and notes that no current Justice has ever sat on the court without Scalia. A [blog post](#) from Sentencing Law and Policy indicates that the Justices did not grant review in any new cases this week and anticipates that the Supreme Court docket likely will be kept relatively light given that the court now faces the possibility of finding itself in a 4-4 tie in high profile cases.

As if things weren’t sufficiently unsettled on the high court already, the [lights in the courtroom unexpectedly went out](#) during Monday’s oral argument. The Justices reportedly continued asking questions in the dark. Let’s take a look at the other news of the week:

Wrongly Convicted Man Released from Prison. Howard Dudley was released from a North Carolina prison on Wednesday after spending more than two decades behind bars. Dudley was convicted of sexual assault in 1992 and was serving a life sentence. [WRAL reports](#) that the alleged victim had stated in the past that she lied about the alleged assault, and at a hearing on Tuesday she again stated that Dudley never touched her inappropriately. A Superior Court judge ruled that Dudley was denied a fair trial due to ineffective assistance of counsel.

People Shot by Police Often Mentally Ill. The [Los Angeles Times reports](#) that “more than a third of people shot by Los Angeles police last year had documented signs of mental illness.” The number, based on a review by LAPD officials “designed to help identify ways to reduce use-of-force incidents,” is triple that from the year before. The report indicates that police commissioners “welcomed the analysis” and thought that it offered valuable data that could be used to improve officer training.

2015 N.C. Crimes Supplement. The day that everyone who works in North Carolina criminal law looks forward to all year has finally arrived. That’s right folks, the [2015 Cumulative Supplement](#) to Jessica Smith’s North Carolina Crimes guidebook is now available. The supplement is full of useful information and covers legislation enacted and case law decided from January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2015. Anybody who works in criminal law knows that NC Crimes is an indispensable resource, so make sure that you’re up to date with the latest supplement.

Help Wanted. The School of Government’s Legislative Reporting Service is [hiring a Daily Bulletin Analyst](#). Among other things, the Daily Bulletin Analyst performs legal analysis, summarizes bills for publication on the LRS website, attends committee meetings, and reviews and edits bill summaries for accuracy. It’s an exciting job so it’s imperative that you have the “ability to maintain composure” while you “work cooperatively in a fast-paced environment.”

Unfriendly Skies. Ars Technica [reports](#) that “a Utah legislator has recently introduced a proposed state law that would allow law enforcement to shoot down drones in certain situations.” An FAA spokesman quoted in the report worries that shooting down a drone would “constitute a ‘significant safety hazard’” and cautions that doing so “could result in a civil penalty from the FAA and/or criminal charges.” Memo to Utah: [just use eagles](#). Sure, the public will ridicule you and eagles will hate you, but let’s see those worrywarts at the FAA slap a majestic eagle with a fine or criminal charge.

