

News Roundup

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This week offered a nice mix of serious legal news and comic relief. Let's start with the serious stuff.

1. The *News and Observer* ran [this story](#) about declining juvenile crime rates. It states in part that “[w]hile overall violent crimes have declined by nearly 14 percent in the state since 2002, the number of teens under 16 charged with violent crimes has dropped by nearly 37 percent. And while overall property crime dropped 4.5 percent during that period, the arrests among teens under 16 is down about 40 percent. . . . Juvenile crime is down nationally, but in North Carolina the downward trend is more than double the national average. That has prompted some to call the state a model for dealing with juvenile delinquency and youth crime prevention.” The story credits better detention centers with a greater emphasis on treatment, and improved partnerships with community organizations for the improvement.
2. The Supreme Court has granted certiorari in *Allelyne v. United States*, essentially agreeing to reconsider its ruling in *Harris v. United States*, 536 U.S. 545 (2002), that facts that increase a defendant’s *minimum* sentence, unlike those that increase a defendant’s *maximum* possible sentence, need not be found by a jury. *Harris*, as I recall, was a North Carolina federal case, argued in the Supreme Court by Assistant Federal Public Defender Bill Ingram, who must be thinking that while he lost the battle, he may not have lost the war. Sentencing Law and Policy covers the issue [here](#), while SCOTUSBlog has a story [here](#).
3. Moving a bit more towards frivolity, the various law school rankings always prove diverting. The Princeton Review just came out with [this list](#) of the law schools that are most difficult to get into. It was surprising to me that UNC was number 8, given that its overall U.S. News ranking is 38. Possibly a sign that many prospective law students are looking for a bargain? Also interesting is that Duke’s not on the list.
4. Now jumping into the absurd with both feet, [this story](#) covers the exploits of Finnish lawyer Taisto Miettinen, who, “with Kristiina Haapanen on his back, won the World Wife Carrying Championships . . . for the fourth time this past summer. Traversing hurdles and water, Miettinen ran a 250m obstacle course to win in just over a minute.” I can barely run that fast on flat ground without carrying anyone! The tax attorney won his wife’s weight in beer as a prize, which apparently was so motivating that the duo crossed the Atlantic to enter – and win – the recent North American Wife Carrying Championship. When an athlete is this dominant, there’s only one thing to do: call for a doping investigation.
5. Finally, it’s election season, and although it is not law-related, I couldn’t resist mentioning [this genuine poll of Virginia voters](#), which makes it pretty clear who the favorite is in the presidential race:

Q1 Do you approve or disapprove of President Barack Obama’s job performance?

Approve 50%
Disapprove 48%
Not sure 2%

Q2 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Mitt Romney?

Favorable 52%
Unfavorable 44%
Not sure 4%

Q10 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Big Bird?

Favorable 56%

Unfavorable 10%

Not sure 34%

Is America ready for a president with feathers? Looks like it.