

News Roundup

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Categories : [Uncategorized](#)

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The budget is done, the Senate has adjourned, and the House will adjourn this morning. I've already posted about one aspect of the budget, [here](#), but it is hundreds of pages long and includes other significant provisions, including (1) closing four prisons (Duplin, Robeson, Bladen, and Wayne), and Western Youth Institution, (2) funding "19 new toxicology positions in the Crime Lab to serve the western part of the State," and providing money for related equipment, (3) cutting the budget for Prisoner Legal Services by \$890,000 per year, (4) cutting the Administration Division of AOC by \$4,000,000 per year, and (5) restoring 22 magistrate positions. The conference committee report on the budget is [here](#). Please use the comments to highlight significant provisions that I didn't mention.

In other news:

Speaking of budgets . . . In the federal courts, sequestration has been especially hard on the federal public defenders, many of whom have been forced into layoffs and furloughs, and some of whom have closed entire offices. The *Huffington Post* lays it out [here](#), including the fact that paying private lawyers to handle the cases formerly assigned to public defenders will actually result in a net cost *increase*, not a savings.

"Thunderous dissents." A new study shows that Supreme Court Justices intensify their language when writing a dissent rather than a majority opinion. The *Washington Post* has the story – and some especially colorful quotes drawn from this Term's dissents – [here](#).

Strange stories. While North Carolina's attention was focused on the legislature, weird stuff was happening elsewhere. Consider (a) that "[a] federal judge has ruled that Nebraska cops must return over \$1 million confiscated at a traffic stop from a woman who saved the money \$1 at a time during her 15 year career as an exotic dancer," according to [ABC News](#); (b) that the meteoric rise in the number of "biker by night and cop by day" police motorcycle clubs has gang investigators worried that the phenomenon may "hurt the credibility of law enforcement and undermine criminal cases brought against traditional [biker] gangs," per the [Wall Street Journal](#); and (c) that in Minnesota, the police apparently recruited Occupy protestors, gave them marijuana and immunity for smoking it, and used the stoned activists to train officers in drug recognition . . . all of which has led to a lawsuit against the police, according to the [WSJ Law Blog](#).

Even stranger story. As unusual as those things are, the weirdest story this week concerns a woman named Renata Shamrakova, who pled guilty in New York to grand larceny after stealing \$821,000 from her boss and using the money "to buy clothes, furniture, international trips and jewelry." ([New York Daily News](#).) Apparently her plea agreement requires her to pay restitution or risk jail time, so naturally she has started a page on [gofundme.com](#), a crowdsourcing site, so that "someone out there" can help her "change [her] fate" by paying her restitution obligation. The page is [here](#). She acknowledges that "[s]ome people may think that this is not the best way to pay back the money . . . that [she] now owe[s]." That's true! Anyhow, so far she's raised \$300, leaving just \$820,700 to go. You can read more about the case and the crowdsourcing effort at [CNET](#) or the [Daily Mail](#).