

News Roundup

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There was a ton of interesting news this week, starting in Union County, where the “district attorney has dismissed cases against 39 people because Monroe police officers failed to provide case files and related work needed for prosecution,” according to [this Charlotte Observer](#) article. The article notes that last year, a judge fined the police department \$10,000 for failing to provide discovery in a murder case. The interim police chief says that he is conducting an internal investigation and has changed case monitoring practices to avoid similar problems in the future.

In other news:

1. **Justice Beasley running.** Justice Cheri Beasley, appointed to the state supreme court when Justice Patricia Timmons-Goodson retired, has announced that she will run to keep her seat, according to [this short item](#) in the *News and Observer*. The election will take place in November 2014.
2. **Death penalty in India rape and murder.** The *New York Times* reports [here](#) that “four men convicted in last December’s horrific gang rape and murder [were] sentenced to death by hanging.” The facts of the case are terrible, and it has received extensive media attention. Interestingly, it sounds as though the capital punishment process in India bears a considerable resemblance to our own: there is a lengthy appeals process, hundreds of people on death row, and a 60/40 public opinion split about whether to have the death penalty at all.
3. **New report on life imprisonment.** An alternative to the death penalty, of course, is imprisonment for life. And the Sentencing Project has just release a report entitled *Life Goes On: The Historic Rise in Life Sentences in America*. It’s available [here](#). Some of its key findings – listed on page 3 of the PDF – are that there are 159,520 people serving life terms nationwide, with 49,081 of those serving life without parole. Both figures have increased significantly over the past five years, with the number of inmates serving LWOP sentences up 22.2% since 2008. Nearly half of life-sentenced inmates are African American. North Carolina has 3,110 life-sentenced inmates, with a bit less than half serving LWOP.
4. **Retroactivity of *Miller v. Alabama*.** Speaking of life sentences, an important legal question unresolved by the Supreme Court or by the North Carolina appellate courts is whether *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. ___ (2012) (ruling that mandatory LWOP sentences for juveniles are unconstitutional), applies retroactively. Jamie noted the issue in [this post](#), and the *New York Times* recently did [this Room for Debate feature](#) on the question featuring five competing views.
5. **Lawyer dissatisfaction satisfaction.** Like being a lawyer? [This Forbes](#) article suggests that you’re an anomaly, claiming that “associate attorney is the unhappiest of all [jobs],” according to an online study of dubious reliability. (Looking for a career change? The same study says that the happiest job is being a realtor.) But [this post](#) at The Lawyer Bubble examines better, and more attorney-specific, data. The results are mixed, but a majority of lawyers seem happy to be in the profession, and there is even evidence of improving satisfaction among some segments of the attorney population.
6. **Talk about being a workaholic.** [This Above the Law](#) story reports on an Ohio attorney who likes being a lawyer so much, he works all the time. Like, 29 hours per day, all billed to the state for indigent defense work. Whoops. The attorney cites “sloppy record-keeping,” which definitely sounds better than “fraud.”
7. **Sovereign citizens, the yellow-fringed flag, and a talking lizard.** Finally, been wanting to learn more about the legal theories advanced by sovereign citizens? [This Above the Law](#) story gives you the scoop on the secret meaning of the yellow-fringed flag and how “the existence of a bar between the audience and the parties exists

to make the courtroom symbolically transform into the bridge of a ship.” For the truly interested, the post also links to two instructional videos, one of which features a lizard. Could be some interesting weekend viewing!