

News Roundup

Author : Jeff Welty

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There was a mountain of interesting news this week. In Charlotte, CMPD officer Randall Kerrick was indicted for voluntary manslaughter for shooting Jonathan Ferrell. As the *Charlotte Observer* reports [here](#), the indictment was issued by the second grand jury to consider the case, after the first returned a no true bill. The defense team sought to block the resubmission of the case, but a judge allowed it. As I previously wrote [here](#), North Carolina law appears to allow multiple bites at the indictment apple.

In other news:

Death penalty sought for marathon bombing defendant. United States Attorney General Eric Holder announced that the government would seek the death penalty against Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, stating that “[t]he nature of the conduct at issue and the resultant harm compel this decision.” The decision was widely expected. CNN has the story [here](#).

Movement afoot on mandatory minimums? The Senate Judiciary Committee has approved, 13-5, the Smarter Sentencing Act, a bill that would significantly reduce federal mandatory minimums in drug cases. The bill appears to have bipartisan support, though of course it is too early to know whether it will pass. Attorney General Holder supports mandatory minimum reform, but the National Association of Assistant United States Attorneys has taken the unusual step of publicly opposing the Attorney General, as discussed [here](#) at Crime and Consequences and [here](#) at the *Huffington Post*. In related news, Deputy Attorney General James Cole gave an interesting speech yesterday to the New York State Bar Association in which he stated that the DOJ is working to “stem the tide” of incarceration for drug crimes, and that it is actively seeking out low-level drug offenders that it can recommend for clemency to President Obama. The entire speech is worth reading and is available [here](#).

The future of the legal marketplace for traffic tickets? Listening to the radio yesterday, I heard an ad for [berniesez.com](#), a website where folks can upload their traffic tickets and get quotes from multiple lawyers on handling their cases. The site is in beta and looks a little amateurish, but at the same time, it feels like the future. If folks have experience with this site – or others like it, if there are any – I’d be interested to know how it went.

Lying journalist barred from being a lawyer. Stephen Glass, who fabricated part of all of 40+ stories for *The New Republic* and other outlets, has lost his bid to be licensed as an attorney in California. Ars Technica has the story [here](#). An interesting potential comparison is Shon Hopwood, the bank robber turned jailhouse lawyer turned D.C. Circuit law clerk, about whom I blogged [here](#). Do you support bar admission for either, neither, or both?

Future DA. Finally, I was very impressed by a story in the newspaper about Alexis Massengill, a senior at South Johnston High School. She’s a top student and the student body president; stars in basketball, volleyball, softball, and track; referees youth sports; is a serious dancer and competes in pageants; sings at her church; works part-time at Belk; and helps on the family farm. What does this have to do with criminal law? She says she “want[s] to be a prosecutor to help others who can’t help themselves.” I wouldn’t bet against her! A version of the article is available from the *Smithfield Herald*, [here](#).