

News Roundup

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I've been enjoying WRAL's website lately. The *News and Observer* is putting more content behind a paywall, and WRAL has had a series of interesting criminal justice stories. The most recent is [this one](#), an inside look at North Carolina's Crime Victims Compensation Fund. Prosecutors, VWLAs, and law enforcement officers may be especially interested in the story's perspective on how well they are doing at connecting eligible victims with compensation.

In other news:

Obama commutes sentence lengthened by typo. The *New York Times* has the bizarre story [here](#), but in a nutshell, a federal drug defendant was sentenced to an extra three years in prison because of a scrivener's error in the calculation of his sentencing guidelines. No one noticed the problem until the defendant himself did several years later, and at that point, he was time-barred from fixing it. President Obama stepped in and cut the sentence back to what it should have been all along. Over at Sentencing Law & Policy, [Doug Berman says](#) he is "disgusted" by the "inhumane" conduct of the federal prosecutors who invoked the time limits on federal habeas petitions to defeat the defendant's claim. I don't know enough to agree, but it certainly sounds bad.

The panopticon is here. And it's in Compton. (The pan-Compti-con?) Gizmodo reports [here](#) on an initiative by Compton, California police to use aerial surveillance cameras to record absolutely all out-of-doors activity in a 25 square mile area, allowing them to create a lasting digital record of criminal activity. It's uncharted territory, but I seriously doubt that pervasive and persistent surveillance of that nature comports with the Fourth Amendment as interpreted by the Supreme Court in *United States v. Jones*. Other cities have also been experimenting with the system.

Amazing article tells you how to really improve your writing. Oops! Two of the ten pointers are to stop using the words "amazing" and "really." The article is short, provocative, and worth a look. It's [here](#).

Shame on you! An Ohio man was sentenced to wear a sign stating in part "I am a bully" and "I pick on disabled children" after he pled no contest to disorderly conduct for allegedly abusing a neighbor's family by spitting on them and smearing feces on their home and car. The man told the media that the judge had "destroyed" him and that the sentence wasn't fair at all. WRAL has the story [here](#).

A suit and fake glasses are not going to help this defendant. Jonathan Schmidt of Lake Elsinore, California, was [arrested for assault with a deadly weapon](#) after allegedly being involved in a knife fight. His mug shot, below, suggests that his appearance may be a challenge for the defense. Sure, the defendant can wear a suit and fake glasses, but somehow, I don't think that's going to do the trick. Perhaps a makeup artist is required – recall [this prior post](#), where I noted a case in which a makeup artist was provided at state expense to an indigent defendant.

