

News Roundup

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If you thought that last week's announcement of the *2013 Punishment Chart for North Carolina Crimes and Motor Vehicle Offenses* was exciting, you will be even more entranced by this week's offering! Yes, the 2013 update to *Arrest Warrant and Indictment Forms* is now available! We're still waiting for the *Publisher's Weekly* review, but if you are looking for a good read that includes charging language for offenses like armed habitual felon or habitual misdemeanor larceny, it's the only game in town. And it's available for free [here](#).

In other news:

DA to drop charges in UNC no-show classes case? According to [this News and Observer](#) story, "Orange County District Attorney Jim Woodall said Monday that he is giving 'serious consideration' to dropping a felony criminal fraud charge against the former department chairman at the center of a long-running academic scandal at UNC-Chapel Hill. Woodall said Julius Nyang'oro's cooperation with a new probe led by former federal prosecutor Kenneth Wainstein has so far shown to be truthful and fruitful."

Another federal case from NC headed to SCOTUS. In the past few years, two of the state's three federal public defender offices have been to the high court. Now, the third office, Federal Defenders of Western North Carolina, is in on the game, getting certiorari granted in *Whitfield v. United States*. SCOTUSBlog's coverage of the case is [here](#). The question presented is "Whether 18 U.S.C. § 2113(e), which provides a minimum sentence of ten years in prison and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for a bank robber who forces another person 'to accompany him' during the robbery or while in flight, requires proof of more than a *de minimis* movement of the victim." Sounds interesting, though probably not of earth-shaking importance beyond federal bank robbery prosecutions.

Omnibus criminal justice bill. The General Assembly mostly seems to be tied up over the budget, but S 594, an omnibus justice reform bill, is moving along and is near passage. You can track the bill [here](#). Among other provisions, it would increase the punishment for carrying a concealed firearm, increase the punishment for inmates having cell phones, expand the offenses that protect court officials to include those connected to such officials, increase the penalties associated with certain amusement park ride violations, move the SBI to the Department of Public Safety, amend the death penalty statutes in light of *Hall v. Florida*, create a new offense of graffiti vandalism, and provide procedures for remote testimony for forensic analysts. There's a lot more in there and it's worth a full read.

Finally, weird stuff happens in prison. Two stories this week grabbed my eye. [This one](#), from the *Daily Beast*, is by a former inmate who characterizes himself as a "jailhouse gourmet." The cooking he describes isn't exactly Martha Stewart – oops, actually maybe it *was* Martha Stewart at one point, but you know what I mean – but is certainly innovative. For example: "It turns out that a nail clipper, divided into two halves and hooked up directly into a power socket will boil water. Dropping live wires into a plastic bag of water is terrifying, and you can't forget to add a pinch of salt in order for the current to flow faster. Of course, this causes the nail clippers to oxidize and the water turns rusty, but it boils. The ochre spaghetti you get looks steampunk, but tastes just fine. And no worries about your iron content." And then there's [this story](#) from the *Huffington Post*, which could have come straight from one of Carl Hiaassen's novels: two Florida inmates smuggled a gun into to prison in order to shoot *themselves* as part of a plot to sue the Department of Correction. The smuggling and the shooting went well, but apparently the inmates' claim that they were "shot by an

unknown assailant while they were praying in their cell” didn’t seem credible. Maybe if they’d said that they were making nail-clipper spaghetti, the story would’ve been more believable.