

News Roundup

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Friday is a University holiday, so we're rounding the news up one day early this week. Despite the short week, there is plenty of criminal law news to report.

1. Senator Robert Menendez (D. N.J.) [was indicted Wednesday](#) on federal bribery charges arising from his relationship with Salomon Melgen, a Florida ophthalmologist. The [indictment](#) is long—and salacious (well, as far as indictments go). Among the allegations are that the senator used his influence [to obtain visas for Melgen's girlfriends](#) from other countries. The senator maintains his innocence and was quoted by the New York Times as saying that “Prosecutors at the Justice Department don’t know the difference between friendship and corruption.” The Atlantic [reports](#) that both sides have something to lose in this prosecution, citing the obvious for Menendez, but also recalling the Department of Justice’s last public corruption case—the badly botched prosecution of Alaska Senator Ted Stevens.
2. Eleven of the twelve Atlanta educators who were tried for their role in a public school cheating scandal were convicted Wednesday. Slate’s story is [here](#). Several others had earlier plead guilty pursuant to plea agreements. The trial judge ordered the defendants convicted at trial jailed immediately and set sentencing for next week. For a compelling read about the cheating at one Atlanta school and the motivations of those involved, check out [this](#) July 2014 New Yorker story by Rachel Aviv.
3. Speaking of scandals, North Carolina has had its share. If you’ve been around here for a few years, you doubtless recall the systematic problems with serology testing and reporting that went unchecked and undiscovered at the SBI crime lab for years. Now, the [News and Observer reports](#) that Daniel Andre Green, the man convicted of murdering Michael Jordan’s father in 1993, is seeking a new trial based in part on misconduct by the SBI analyst who testified at Green’s trial that blood was found on the seat of James Jordan’s car.
4. The North Carolina General Assembly is hard at work considering the many bills filed before last week’s Senate bill filling deadline. Several bills would amend the State’s DWI laws, including [S 671](#) (which would permit early license restoration for DWI defendants who successfully complete drug treatment court programs), [S 309](#) (which would amend G.S. 20-138.5 to reduce from three to two the number of previous DWI convictions a person must have to commit habitual impaired driving); [S 308](#) (which would require that all licenses restored following an impaired driving revocation contain a 0.00 alcohol concentration rather than the 0.04 restriction that currently applies to first-time-offenders). But if they want to save lives, maybe they should just raise taxes. Say what? Doug Berman [reports](#) at Sentencing Law & Policy on a recent study finding a significant reduction in fatal car crashes in Illinois after that state increased its alcohol taxes in 2009. But wait . . . North Carolina also

increased its [alcohol excise tax](#) in 2009. It seems the legislature is wise to continue to look for additional solutions.