

News Roundup

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Date : February 18, 2010

I am dumbfounded by the rapid pace of criminal law news over the past week or so. Some news items that may be of interest:

1. Unless you've sworn off TV, radio, the internet, and all communication with your fellow humans, you probably know that a three-judge panel in Wake County exonerated Greg Taylor this week. The *News and Observer* story is [here](#); The *New York Times* story is [here](#); and Sentencing Law and Policy's blog post is [here](#).
2. The North Carolina Supreme Court recently heard oral argument in the *Bowden* case, concerning the meaning of a life sentenced imposed during a few years in the 1970. The *News and Observer* story is [here](#). We've followed the story with several posts on this blog; the basic issue is discussed [here](#). As an aside, the United States Supreme Court releases oral argument transcripts the day of the argument -- they're posted [here](#) -- and many appellate courts now promptly post audio or video recordings of oral arguments. Perhaps our appellate courts could do something similar? **Update:** a helpful reader pointed out that WRAL TV has a video of the *Bowden* argument [here](#), for now.
3. Speaking of promptly posting things to the web, the General Assembly's site has just been updated so that the [version of the General Statutes available there](#) is current through the 2009 legislative session.
4. [Justice Kennedy gave a speech not long ago](#) in which he argued that prison sentences in America are generally too long. He specifically bemoaned California's recidivist law, reportedly saying "[t]he three-strikes law[s] sponsor is the correctional officers' union and that is sick." The *New York Times* just ran an [editorial](#) based on the speech, though Doug Berman at Sentencing Law and Policy [thinks that the editorial is "a little off"](#) and "imperfect" for reasons he details in his post.
5. Although Justice Kennedy seems to have plenty of fire for his work, there is [increasing speculation](#) that there will be not one (Stevens) but two (Ginsburg) Supreme Court vacancies soon. Let the chatter and idle speculation begin! Oh, wait. [It already has](#).
6. A few miscellaneous items: Arizona's considering a bill that would [prevent courts from considering foreign or religious law](#). (Not to be outdone, [Iowa's got a bill pending](#) that would prevent courts from considering . . . *precedent*.) A famous [BBC journalist admits killing a former lover](#), sparking a debate about assisted suicide. And in Kansas, if you draw a gun in self-defense, [you'd better use it](#).