

News Roundup

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The front page of my local newspaper today featured a story about the General Assembly's vote to override the Governor's veto of the legislation allowing magistrates to opt out of marriages. Attracting less attention in the public at large, but important to the readers of this blog, was the Governor's signature of a bill changing the way that state supreme court justices are elected.

The bill, the final version of which is [here](#), is effective immediately. Justices who are appointed to fill a vacancy will be required to run in a multi-candidate election, but once a justice has been elected, he or she will face only retention elections – an up-or-down vote on the justice's continued service. The idea seems to be to make such elections less political and less expensive. My colleague Michael Crowell wrote a fascinating blog post [here](#) on whether retention elections are consistent with the state constitution, including an intriguing discussion of a similar issue arising in Tennessee, where the entire state supreme court recused itself from hearing the matter and a "special supreme court" was convened. Tennessee said retention elections are OK, but for reasons Michael explores, the same result might not obtain here.

In other news:

Profile of judge fighting cancer. WRAL posted [this profile](#) of Superior Court Judge Carl Fox, from Orange County, who has been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer and who needs a bone marrow transplant to survive. Judge Fox is a gracious man and very popular with the bench and bar. Here's hoping that he gets what he needs.

Gun bill stumbles? No session of the General Assembly would be complete without a controversial bill expanding gun rights. This year, that bill is [H 562](#). Among other provisions, it would allow legislators with concealed carry permits to carry concealed weapons in the General Assembly; would require doctors who ask patients about firearms on written questionnaires to indicate that the gun-related questions are optional; and would repeal the sheriff-administered system of pistol purchase permits. The bill has attracted national attention, particularly the permit aspect. This week, when it seemed that the House was prepared to vote on the bill, it was [re-referred to committee](#) to address "concerns."

Charleston shooting news. Michael Slager, the North Charleston officer who was recorded shooting Walter Scott in the back as the latter fled, has been indicted on non-capital murder charges. One unusual aspect of the case is that the man who recorded the shooting is "charging a \$10,000 fee or more to carry footage" of the incident. ArsTechnica discusses the copyright issue [here](#).

Statistics on deaths caused by, and among, law enforcement officers. In related news, *The Guardian* has a new project up called [The Counted](#), which attempts to count each death caused by law enforcement. The project is "crowdsourced," and plans to count only "deaths arising directly from encounters with law enforcement," including "people who were shot, tasered and struck by police vehicles as well those who died in police custody," but not those who died in traffic accidents while fleeing police or who committed suicide while in contact with law enforcement. For those interested in quantifying officers' line of duty deaths, one possible source is [here](#).

Reefer madness. Finally, two head-scratching news items that relate to marijuana. First, Santa Ana, California officers

raiding an unlicensed marijuana “dispensary” were caught on the store’s video surveillance system sampling “edibles” and playing darts. Oops! An internal investigation is underway. The local story is [here](#). Second, a Florida woman paid a man \$5 for marijuana, but he didn’t hold up his end of the bargain. Her recourse? [Calling 911 to complain](#): “He got my money, I want my drugs.” What she got, was arrested.