

News Roundup

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This week, the General Assembly passed [H774](#), which, if signed by the governor or allowed to become law without his signature, would make two significant changes in the administration of the death penalty. Specifically, it would allow a medical professional other than a physician to be present at an execution (current law requires a doctor), and would allow the state to withhold from the public information concerning the identity of any person or entity that supplies the drugs used in lethal injection. WRAL covers the controversy over the bill [here](#). Generally, proponents contend that the changes are needed to allow executions to resume while opponents argue that the bill will simply engender more litigation.

In other news:

Red light cameras in Fayetteville. Red light cameras have been rare in North Carolina in recent years. My understanding is that municipalities moved away from them after *Shavitz v. City of High Point*, 177 N.C. App. 465 (2006), where the court of appeals ruled that the monetary penalties imposed based on the cameras must go to the schools, not to the city. But they're up and running again in Fayetteville, according to [this WRAL story](#). Fayetteville's web site explains the program [here](#).

Unpopular Supreme Court. If the Court were a teenager, it would *not* get invited to go to the mall this weekend with the in crowd. Above the Law reports [here](#) on the latest Gallup poll, which finds the Court's approval rating to be at an all-time low. Opinions break down along ideological lines – in the wake of the same-sex marriage decision, most Democrats think the Court is “actually pretty cool,” but 82% of Republicans think it is “super lame” and “would not be caught dead hanging out with it.”

Experts oppose killer robots! Okay, it's a little off-topic for this blog, but it's interesting. Over a thousand prominent scientists, roboticists, and engineers recently signed a letter promoting a global ban on autonomous weapons systems, i.e., weapons that engage targets without direct human control. Just as we're on the precipice of self-driving cars, we may be on the brink of a global artificial intelligence arms race. The story's [here](#), and an opposing view – nothing wrong with a few killer robots! – is [here](#).

Law schools are “failure factories.” Not all law schools are, but the track record of most of California's many non-accredited law schools is abysmal, according to [this Los Angeles Times](#) article. Nearly 9 out of 10 students who enroll drop out. Of those who graduate, fewer than 1 in 5 pass the bar and become attorneys. I'm no mathematician, but I believe that means that only about 2% of those who start at an unaccredited school end up as lawyers. Ouch.

Best toddler birthday party ever. Finally, the *Wall Street Journal* Law Blog reports [here](#) on Louisiana toddler Grayson Dobra, who recently turned two. He is entranced by local personal injury lawyer Morris Bart, prefers him to Mickey Mouse, and “can't stop watching” the attorney's ubiquitous TV ads – even going so far as to seek them out on YouTube to get his fix. The child's mother decided to double down on the kid's interest, and threw him a Morris Bart-themed birthday party, complete with a Morris Bart cake, a Morris Bart t-shirt, and a life-size cardboard cutout of . . . Morris Bart. The great man himself did not attend, but did send an autographed photo, some key chains, and a shirt.