

## News Roundup

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The Charlotte Observer [reports](#) that North Carolina did not have a Powerball jackpot winner but that two tickets worth \$2 million each were sold in the state, one in Raleigh and the other in Spring Lake. According to the [Chicago Tribune](#), lottery winners should hire lawyers before coming forward to claim their prizes. According to the [ABA Journal](#), if you participate with others in a ticket-buying group, it may be a good idea to consult with a lawyer before even buying tickets in order to avoid a potentially costly dispute regarding the terms of the joint purchase agreement. The first thing we do, let's hire some lawyers, as it were.

**Grand Juries.** The Washington Post reports [here](#) that it counted 986 “on-duty police killings by firearm” in 2015 as part of a year-long tracking project. According to the Post, this number is “well more than double the average number reported annually by the FBI over the past decade.” The article contains interesting information about the shootings including statistics regarding the race and mental health of those who were shot and whether they were armed. Jeff has [previously blogged](#) about approaches prosecutors take to grand juries in cases of officer-involved shootings. It's fair to say that approaches vary across jurisdictions and can be controversial. In the most recent [North Carolina State Bar Journal](#), Wake Forest University law professor Ronald Wright describes tensions that can arise when grand juries are deciding whether criminal charges are warranted in cases of officer-involved shootings, and suggests a “categorical rule that gives this type of case automatically to special prosecutors.”

**Death Penalty.** Earlier this week the United States Supreme Court held in [Hurst v. Florida](#) that Florida's capital sentencing scheme is unconstitutional. Florida uses a sentencing procedure where a defendant convicted of a capital crime may be sentenced to death “only if an additional sentencing proceeding ‘results in findings by the court that such person shall be punished by death.’” Slip Op. at 2. The Court determined that this procedure is unconstitutional in light of *Ring v. Arizona*, 536 U.S. 584 (2002), where the court held that the Sixth Amendment requires that a jury, rather than a judge, must determine any fact upon which a legislature conditions an increase in the maximum punishment for a criminal offense.

A post from [The Marshall Project](#) describes the consequences of the *Hurst* ruling for Florida's justice system. A report released last year by [Amnesty International](#) examines the use of the death penalty worldwide in 2014. Notably, the report indicates that in 2014 the United States “remained the only country to carry out executions in the Americas region” but that, compared to the preceding year, there were fewer executions recorded and fewer states carried out executions.

**Professional Ethics.** The News and Observer reports [here](#) that North Carolina attorney Christine Mumma, the Executive Director of the North Carolina Center on Actual Innocence, received a written admonishment from a State Bar disciplinary panel as a result of misconduct allegations. According to the story, the bar alleged that Mumma engaged in professional misconduct when she had a water bottle tested for DNA. Mumma apparently took the bottle from the home of Marie Andrus, whose brothers had been suspects in a 1976 double murder for which Joseph Sledge was [wrongfully convicted](#). Andrus had declined to provide a DNA sample when the bottle was taken.