

## News Roundup

**Author :** Jeff Welty

**Categories :** [Uncategorized](#)

**Tagged as :** [news](#)

**Date :** November 18, 2016

CNN [reports](#) that “[t]he latest FBI annual hate crimes report shows a sharp spike in the number of hate crimes nationwide, with attacks against Muslims increasing the most sharply.” The report is based on data from 2015, compared to 2014. While the percentage increase for crimes against Muslims was greatest, anti-Semitic incidents were the most prevalent in absolute terms. The report is available [here](#). Has there been an increase in hate crimes after the recent presidential election? [Yes](#). Or, [no](#). Or, [yes, just like after President Obama was first elected](#). We may need more than 10 days of data to answer that question definitively. Keep reading for more news.

**State Supreme Court, Part I.** Various news outlets including the [Winston-Salem Journal](#), the [Greensboro News & Record](#), and [WRAL](#) are reporting that state legislators may be considering expanding the North Carolina Supreme Court by adding two justices to the court in a special legislative session before the end of the year. The article from the Winston-Salem Journal says that one of its sources is a state legislator, but also says that other lawmakers have indicated that they are unaware of a plan to add justices to the court.

**State Supreme Court, Part II.** UNC law professor John Orth [writes in the News and Observer](#) that the state supreme court has adopted new Rule 29.1. The rule provides that “the Chief Justice may, when necessary to avoid the possibility of an evenly divided disposition [such as when one justice recuses himself or herself], appoint a substitute justice who will participate in the consideration and decision of the matter.” The substitute justice is to be selected “using a neutral rotation process from a list of eligible retired justices maintained by the Supreme Court.” Professor Orth poses a number of interesting questions about the rule, including which former justices count as “retired,” what makes a retired justice “eligible,” and what happens if it is the Chief Justice who recuses himself or herself.

**Solitary.** A recently published [article](#) in the Charlotte Observer examines the use of solitary confinement in North Carolina prisons, saying that information from state prison officials indicates that roughly 2,500 inmates are in solitary at any given time. As of early March, seven North Carolina inmates had been in solitary for more than ten years. The Observer article says that state prison officials have “been working to reduce their use of the punishment as awareness grows about the dangerous psychological effects of isolating prisoners.” The News Roundup previously has [noted](#) increasing interest in reforming the use of solitary confinement.

**Wildfires.** As the Asheville Citizen-Times [reports](#), the western part of the state is engulfed in smoke due to numerous wildfires burning on roughly 46,000 acres in the mountains. Forest Service law enforcement and local sheriff’s departments are investigating whether any of the fires were caused by arson. WLOS [reports](#) that the North Carolina Forest Service has issued a ban on all open burning and cancelled burning permits for numerous western counties. The Administrative Office of the Court [reports no court closings](#) as a result of the fires.

**Podcast.** A new episode of *Beyond the Bench* is now available [here](#), as well as on iTunes and Stitcher. Recall that this season focuses on juvenile homelessness. The new episode explores how DSS responds to reports of homeless kids, when court action is required, and what is involved in obtaining an emergency order to remove kids from their living situations.