

## News Roundup

**Author :** Jeff Welty

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

**Tagged as :** [news](#), [sweepstakes](#), [visual identification](#), [ward](#)

**Date :** June 18, 2010

There's been lots of interesting news lately, so I'll dive right in.

1. The state supreme court issued several opinions yesterday. By far the most significant criminal case is [State v. Ward](#). I may do a whole post about *Ward*, but the basic holding is that visual identification of controlled substances is unreliable and that "[u]nless the State establishes . . . that another method of identification is sufficient to establish the identity of the controlled substance beyond a reasonable doubt, some form of scientifically valid chemical analysis is required."
2. The front page of the *News and Observer* today features a [story](#) about the General Assembly's efforts to outlaw so-called "internet sweepstakes," the offspring of video poker. These games have proven to be an elusive target, and it will be interesting to see what action, if any, the legislature takes.
3. The legislature also appears to be considering whether to ban "synthetic cannabinoids," including "Spice." As I understand it, these products are combinations of non-controlled herbal ingredients intended to mimic the effects of marijuana. [HB 2073](#) and [SB 1452](#) are authorizing resolutions that represent first steps in the direction of a ban.
4. Last week, I mentioned that a death row inmate in Utah requested to be executed by firing squad. The execution took place early this morning, apparently without incident as reported [here](#).
5. Ars Technica recently [profiled the FBI's five most wanted cyber criminals](#). It's an interesting group, though I find it a little hard to believe that a guy who enabled other people to get satellite TV without paying for it really cracked the top five.
6. Finally, a couple of stories on the lighter side. The *News and Observer* recently carried a [story](#) about a thief who robbed a convenience store of \$66 . . . but dropped \$65 of it on the sidewalk during his getaway. Who says crime doesn't pay? And CNET [reports](#) that a Tennessee man unhappy with getting a ticket in what he viewed as a speed trap got the last laugh when he noticed that the local police department's website registration was expired. He bought the domain, replacing the department's website with information about the speed camera that snared him.