

News Roundup

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The Supreme Court has been the subject of most of the interesting news over the past week or so.

1. The Court just finished the Term that began in October 2009. It's now on hiatus until the fall. A short and worthwhile recap of the Term appears [here](#), on SCOTUSblog. It challenges some commonly-held beliefs about the Court, such as "that the Court decides its big cases by five-to-four majorities on ideological lines."

2. One of the most significant cases of the Term -- *McDonald v. City of Chicago*, about which I blogged [here](#) -- was, in fact, decided five-to-four along ideological lines. (In a nutshell, the Court struck down Chicago's handgun ban as violating the Second Amendment.) That case has already sparked a reaction in Chicago. As Sentencing Law and Policy reports, Mayor Richard Daley has proposed an ordinance that would prohibit anyone "convicted of a violent crime, domestic violence or two or more convictions for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs" from owning a gun; would limit other residents to owning a single gun; would require gun owners to take a four-hour class and a one-hour session at a gun range, which could be difficult given that Chicago does not permit gun ranges to be open to the public; and so on.

3. The end of the Term marks the end of Justice Stevens's long tenure on the Court. The woman nominated to replace him, Elena Kagan, is marching through her confirmation hearing without major incident. The *Wall Street Journal's* Law Blog aggregates quite a bit of coverage [here](#), but my favorite tidbit about the hearings is reported [here](#) at the Volokh Conspiracy: Harvard professor and noted conservative Jack Goldsmith testified in support of the nomination, and concluded his written testimony by admonishing the Judiciary Committee that the President's "decision to nominate a highly qualified individual who swims in the broad mainstream of American legal life . . . warrants deference from the Senate," including those Senators who are not members of the President's political party. About the selective embrace of that principle, he said "Democrats are right now and the Republicans were right [during the confirmation hearings regarding Justice Alito and the Chief Justice]."

4. The School of Government and the Office of Indigent Defense Services are co-sponsoring two conferences in the near future. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Parent Attorney Conference, and [here](#) to learn more about the Juvenile Defender Conference.

5. Finally, two stories that share a theme of substance abuse but that are otherwise very different. *Parade* magazine has [this inspiring story](#) about a former homeless drug addict who is now a respected lawyer in Massachusetts and a possible future judge. Meanwhile, Reuters has [this story](#), which is pretty well captured by its headline: "Trapped drunk driver opens another beer as [he] awaits rescue." (Hat tip: Crime and Consequences.) The defense lawyer's explanation of his client's decision is priceless.