

News Roundup

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As WRAL [reports](#), former Wake County Register of Deeds Laura Riddick pleaded guilty late last week to felony embezzlement charges arising from her years-long practice of diverting funds from the office for her personal use. Under the terms of Riddick's plea agreement, she repaid \$926,615 that she had taken from the office and will serve a five to seven year prison sentence. The WRAL report says that three other former employees of the deeds office have been charged in connection with the case. Keep reading for more news.

Cline Reinstated. From a fall from grace we turn to a story of redemption, with the Durham Herald Sun [reporting](#) that former Durham County District Attorney Tracy Cline has had her law license reinstated earlier this week by the State Bar. Cline was in the news frequently beginning in late 2011 because of allegations that she made against Superior Court Judge Orlando Hudson concerning her belief that he had conspired with the News & Observer to discredit her. Those allegations ultimately led to her being removed from office in 2012 and her law license being suspended in 2015. The Herald Sun report says that Cline plans to develop a civil practice.

Silent Sam. Earlier this week, WRAL [reported](#) on email and text message communications by the Chapel Hill Police Department that indicate that officers were instructed to not engage with the protesters who toppled the controversial Silent Sam statue on UNC's campus. The same report indicates that a Chapel Hill officer at the scene who has a tattoo that appears to be associated with the Three Percenters militia group has been placed on paid leave. At the time of this post's writing on Thursday afternoon, protests on both sides of the Silent Sam issue were planned for Thursday evening and UNC was urging the public to avoid the areas of campus where the protests were expected to occur.

Nebraska Fentanyl Execution. NPR [reports](#) that earlier this month Nebraska became the first state to use fentanyl as part of a lethal injection protocol, using the synthetic opioid in the execution of Carey Dean Moore. Beyond the fentanyl issue, the NPR report details the difficulty Nebraska experienced in acquiring other drugs used in the execution. As the News Roundup previously has [noted](#), drug makers increasingly oppose the use of their products in executions. Moore's execution was the first in Nebraska in more than 20 years.

Sugar's Only Sweetness. A few months ago, Jeff [noted](#) that some law enforcement agencies have stopped field testing white powders suspected to be contraband because of the danger that officers will be exposed to fentanyl. The New Hanover County Sheriff's Office apparently continues to conduct field tests, but a recent story making national news reveals a new problem – the potential that 13 pounds of white powder that field tests positive for fentanyl [actually is sugar](#).

Facebook Wiretap. Reuters [reports](#) that in a little-known California case that is proceeding under seal, the U.S. government is trying to compel Facebook to break the end-to-end encryption of its Messenger application so that authorities can wiretap conversations taking place on the platform. The government has filed a motion to hold Facebook in contempt for refusing to carry out a surveillance request, but Facebook is arguing that breaking the app's encryption would require it to rewrite the app's underlying code or specifically hack the targeted user.

Duncan Hunter. Late last week California congressman Duncan Hunter and his wife were indicted for using more than \$250,000 in campaign funds for personal expenses and attempting to conceal the scheme by falsifying campaign finance reports. Hunter has said that the charges are politically motivated and that he will stay in office while seeking

reelection this fall. The L.A. Times has the story [here](#).

Lose It. We're approaching the first Monday in September so it's understandable if you've got your Hush Puppies on and booze in your blender; maybe you're heading out to San Francisco for the show; or maybe you're going for a burger at a Holiday Inn. However you plan to change your attitude or latitude, for your own safety and that of others do it responsibly by not drinking and driving – law enforcement agencies across the state will be out in force while participating in the [annual Labor Day Booze It and Lose It campaign](#) against drunk driving.