

News Roundup

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The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the allegations of sexual assault leveled against Judge Brett Kavanaugh by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford was the major news of the week. Both Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford testified before the committee, with Kavanaugh flatly denying the alleged assault and Blasey Ford declaring that she was certain that Kavanaugh attacked her. Republican committee members ceded their time for questioning to Arizona prosecutor Rachel Mitchell while Democrats questioned Blasey Ford directly. That approach resulted in an unusual proceeding that sharply alternated in five minute segments between a trial-like examination of Blasey Ford and a more traditional Senate committee hearing. Keep reading for more news.

Florence Affects Courts. Hurricane Florence has significantly affected the operation of the court systems of several North Carolina counties. Last week Chief Justice Mark Martin entered an order that extends the time and periods of limitation for court filings and other acts due to be done in various counties in the eastern part of the state. The order is available [here](#).

The North Carolina State Bar has compiled a list of legal resources for people who are in need of legal assistance in the wake of the Hurricane. That list is available [here](#).

Attorney Accused of Exoneration Compensation Fraud. The North Carolina State Bar has filed a complaint against Florida attorney Patrick Megaro alleging that he defrauded, deceived, and embezzled funds from two North Carolina men who were exonerated of rape and murder in 2014. As WRAL [reports](#), Henry McCollum and Leon Brown each received \$750,000 as compensation from the state for the 31 years they spent in prison following wrongful convictions. The State Bar alleges that Megaro collected a third of that compensation award despite doing virtually no work on the exonerations or the compensation cases.

Pretrial Release Program. The Smokey Mountain News [reports](#) that Judicial District 30B, which encompasses Haywood and Jackson counties, will implement a pilot pretrial release program intended to reduce jail populations and recidivism rates while increasing the fairness and efficiency of the court system. Among other things, the pilot program encourages judicial officials to set unsecured bonds for low-level offenders. The Pretrial Justice Institute is providing technical assistance for the project, with Jessie Smith and Western Carolina University Professor Jamie Vaske also providing implementation support. The pilot program starts in January.

Police Chief & Town Manager Charged. The Charlotte Observer [reports](#) that Red Springs Police Chief Ronnie Patterson and Town Manager David Ashburn recently were indicted on several charges related to their alleged unlawful removal of public records from a town hall vault. The records at issue concern a sexual harassment case that was filed against Patterson by a town employee and they were discovered when the contents of his rental storage unit were sold at auction.

Cosby Sentenced. Bill Cosby was [sentenced](#) to 3 to 10 years in prison this week in Pennsylvania for his sexual assault of Andrea Constand in 2004. Cosby was immediately taken into custody to begin serving the sentence and was fined \$25,000. The judge designated Cosby a “sexually violent predator” and, consequently, he will be required to register as a sex offender and undergo counseling for the remainder of his life after he is released.

CLE Opportunity. As we’ve [mentioned](#) previously, the School of Government is offering a new CLE program that we

think will interest blog readers. On November 16, 6.25 hours of CLE is on offer at the [Back to School CLE @ SOG](#). We hope to see you there.

Cat Crimes. As CBS News [reports](#), the decision to charge Wayne County resident Tammie Hedges with 12 counts of misdemeanor unauthorized practice of veterinary medicine based on her efforts to shelter and care for pets affected by Hurricane Florence sparked a public backlash that culminated this week in the dismissal of all of the charges. The Wayne County Government released a statement about the situation that is available [here](#).