

## News Roundup

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The top of the news today is that the Attorney General has removed and reassigned SBI director Robin Pendergraft and has at least temporarily stopped the work of "bloodstain pattern analysts" pending further review. The *News and Observer* has much more detail [here](#). But even before this significant development, the week had been full of news:

1. The *New York Times*, looking back at the past five Supreme Court Terms, claims that the Roberts Court is "the most conservative one in living memory, based on an analysis of four sets of political science data." The full article, available [here](#), notes that the shift is "modest," and not uniform. It contains several interesting comments from retired Justices Stevens and O'Connor, and argues that the key change was not the confirmation of Chief Justice Roberts, but the replacement of Justice O'Connor with Justice Alito. Well worth a read.
2. The *Times* also ran [this article](#), highlighting the difficult task of prosecuting drivers who are impaired by prescription medications. The key problem, according to the *Times*, is that "there is no agreement on what level of drugs in the blood impairs driving." I'd be interested in folks' thoughts about how significant a difficulty that is.
3. Congress recently passed legislation that will narrow, but not eliminate, the disparate treatment of crack and powder cocaine under federal law. Sentencing Law and Policy is on top of this story -- see posts [here](#) and [here](#).
4. It appears that one of the United States Attorneys who will be responsible for enforcing the new federal drug regime will be Superior Court Judge Ripley Rand. The *News and Observer* notes his nomination [here](#), though as Judges Wynn and Diaz could tell Judge Rand, nomination is one thing, and confirmation -- or even a confirmation hearing -- is another.
5. The AP recently reported on the Secure Communities program. The basic idea? "Under the program, the fingerprints of everyone who is booked into jail for any crime are run against FBI criminal history records and Department of Homeland Security immigration records to determine who is in the country illegally and whether they've been arrested previously. Most jurisdictions are not included in the program, but Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been expanding the initiative." Quite a few North Carolina jurisdictions participate. Read more [here](#).
6. Finally, some reasons I feel fortunate to live in the United States. [Unlike in Mexico](#), our correctional authorities don't release groups of dangerous prisoners to act as hit squads for drug lords. While our courts are crowded, [unlike in India](#), we don't have a 460-year backlog of cases. [Unlike in Cambodia](#), someone who intentionally murdered 14,000 people and offered only "limited expressions of remorse" wouldn't be sentenced to less than 20 years in prison. [Unlike in Russia](#), police corruption is not "endemic" and expected from every officer from day one. Our country's not perfect, but boy, it could be a lot worse.