

News Roundup

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Though Independence Day has passed, the celebration will continue for many through a weekend of travel and events with family and friends. Through Friday evening, the NCDOT is [suspending](#) most major projects that require lane closure, and projects may be suspended on Sunday as well. Law enforcement agencies across the state are putting extra emphasis on safe driving and boating this weekend, planning impaired driving checkpoints and extra patrols with [Operation Firecracker](#). If you shoot off any actual firecrackers, you might be [violating state law](#) and you shouldn't compound the situation by doing it unsafely – be smart and consult the Consumer Products Safety Commission's [2019 Fireworks Injuries](#) poster. Enjoy the holiday weekend and keep reading for more news.

Innocence Commission. The Associated Press [reported](#) this week that the appointment of former Robeson County District Attorney Johnson Britt as a representative of defense attorneys on the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission has caused some controversy. [State law](#) requires that the Commission include a member who is a prosecuting attorney and another who is a defense attorney. Britt represented prosecuting attorneys on the Commission until his recent retirement as District Attorney. North Carolina Court of Appeals Chief Judge Linda McGee appointed Britt to the new role representing defense attorneys, saying that he was “fair, capable and very involved” in his previous role. Some defense attorneys, including Chris Mumma of the North Carolina Center on Actual Innocence, have said that the perspective that comes with years of experience as a defense attorney is critically important for the position.

Online Threats. The Associated press [reports](#) that a Black Mountain man is facing a federal criminal charge for allegedly threatening to lynch a candidate for state senate in Virginia. Joseph Cecil Vandevere was indicted for interstate communication of a threat to injure a person because it is suspected that he tweeted a picture of a lynching and the words “view your destiny” at Qasim Rashid, a candidate for office in Virginia.

Buncombe Sentencing. WLOS [reports](#) that sentencing dates have been set for former Buncombe County officials who were convicted of federal offenses related to [corruption](#) while in office. Wanda Greene, Mandy Stone, Jon Creighton, and Michael Greene all will be sentenced on August 28.

CBP Overcrowding. This week the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General released a [report](#) that says that “dangerous overcrowding and prolonged detention of children and adults in the Rio Grande Valley” at Customs and Border Protection holding facilities requires immediate attention and action. The report says that conditions at the facilities “represent an immediate risk to the health and safety of DHS agents and officers, and to those detained.” The report explains that within DHS, long-term detention of migrants is the responsibility of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, rather than CBP, but that ICE's bed occupancy already exceeds its funding levels by 12,000 beds. Thus, “Border Patrol continues to hold detainees for more than 72 hours in overcrowded conditions while they await transfer.”

Firefighter Facebook. WRAL [reports](#) that the North Chatham Fire Department has fired a firefighter following disturbing comments he made on Facebook regarding the immigration situation at the U.S. – Mexico border. Caleb Folwell reportedly said in a Facebook discussion of the situation that in his view “[t]hey should exterminate all captive [sic] right now and broadcast it over Mexican national TV to send a message that if you cross illegally you die.” At least [11 people](#) have died in federal immigration custody since last September.

Seal Trial. The Associated Press [reports](#) that jurors in a military trial this week acquitted a high-ranking Navy Seal of murdering an Islamic State captive in Iraq in 2017. In a case that received national attention, Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher was accused of stabbing an already wounded captive to death and then posing for a photograph with the corpse. Gallagher was convicted of an offense arising from posing in the photograph. The jury gave Gallagher the maximum sentence for the offense, four months of confinement, but he already has served more than four months in pretrial confinement