

## News Roundup

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It's been two weeks since the last news roundup, so there's a lot to report:

1. Superior Court Judges Catherine Eagles and Ripley Rand have been confirmed by the Senate to new federal jobs in the Middle District of North Carolina, Rand as United States Attorney and Eagles as a district judge. Congratulations to both!
2. The appellate division of the North Carolina court system has made some changes to its website. Among the cool new features is the option to subscribe to email notification of new opinions, which you can do [here](#). Of course, we'll continue to blog about the most noteworthy decisions.
3. The *News and Observer* has had a number of SBI-related stories recently, and also ran [this interesting item](#) about the cost of defending capital murder cases. Apparently, a recent Charlotte case resulted in \$475,000 in defense costs at the trial level.
4. The "instant runoff" election for the court of appeals seat currently held by Judge Cressie Thigpen has [resulted in a not-so-instant recount](#). Preliminary indications are that former court of appeals judge Doug McCullough will be returning to the bench.
5. Nationally, there have been some interesting developments regarding the death penalty. In Oklahoma, drug shortages led authorities to use a different pharmaceutical "cocktail" in an execution conducted last night, [apparently without incident](#). In Texas, a trial judge began to conduct a hearing about the constitutionality of the death penalty in Texas -- apparently in response to a defense motion to bar the death penalty in a pending capital case -- but an appellate court stopped the hearing, [at least for now](#).
6. The *Los Angeles Times* has [this](#) interesting story about the increasing use of extremely realistic masks by criminals. It notes that "[a] white bank robber in Ohio recently used [such a] mask manufactured by a small Van Nuys company to disguise himself as a black man, prompting police there to mistakenly arrest an African American man for the crimes."
7. Finally, on a holiday note, [this](#) AP article reports that a California inmate cited his fervent belief in the *Seinfeld* holiday Festivus "as a reason to get kosher meals reserved for inmates with religious needs." But as everyone of a certain age knows, "[k]eeping kosher is not one of the tenets of Festivus, which [is] celebrated with the airing of grievances and the display of an aluminum pole." Apparently, the sheriff gave the inmate two months of kosher meals before cutting him off.