

News Roundup

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Date : June 3, 2011



[According to the News and Observer](#), plea negotiations regarding former Senator John Edwards have not resulted in an agreement, and Edwards "was indicted today [*editor's note*: literally, an hour or so ago] on charges of conspiracy and false statements and campaign law violations." The paper previously ran a [detailed analysis](#) of some of the legal issues in the case. In the reporter's view, "[t]he main questions in a criminal case would be whether payments to Edwards' mistress and a campaign staffer were intended to keep his 2008 campaign alive, and whether he knew about them." The former issue seems to involve some interesting election law considerations. In other news:

1. The General Assembly has continued working on the budget. Under the Dome reports [here](#) that the Senate has passed a \$19.7 billion budget and sent it to the House for consideration. According to the [News and Observer](#), "[t]he House plans to send it to [the Governor] on Saturday. Five House Democrats have said they will join Republicans in support, creating a veto-proof margin." Whether the budget is veto-proof is significant because Governor Perdue opposes the budget, in large part because of its cuts to education. The budget would also affect the court system in a variety of ways. For example, the *Charlotte Observer* reports [here](#) that it would eliminate drug treatment courts.
2. The General Assembly has been working on other issues as well. The *News and Observer* reports [here](#) that a House Judiciary Committee has endorsed a bill that would repeal the Racial Justice Act. The vote was 9-6, along party lines. I believe that the story refers to Senate Bill 9, which can be tracked [here](#). Meanwhile, the paper reports [here](#) that "[t]he Certification of Restoration of Rights Act, approved unanimously today by the House Judiciary Committee, would assist individuals convicted of less serious crimes in dealing with barriers to finding lawful work, providing they meet qualifications including completion of their sentence and not having a prior criminal record." The bill in question appears to be House Bill 641, and there was in fact one dissenting vote, as noted [here](#).
3. Like politics, law enforcement is often serious but at times ridiculous. An example of the latter took place in Kansas City recently, where police responding to a report of an alligator on the loosed [shot the creature twice](#) . . . only to discover that it was an object d'art, made of concrete.
4. Even farther afield, weird and awful stuff seems to be happening in Europe. Consider Stephen Griffiths, a repeat violent offender who had been diagnosed as a psychopath and who often expressed his preoccupation with multiple murder. After being released from one of several stints in prison in Britain, he was selected by the University of Bradford "to pursue a doctorate in homicide studies, a subdivision of the Department of Criminal Justice Studies, with

fees and living expenses paid by the government." Seriously. Tragically, "[i]n 2009 and 2010, while pursuing his [degree], Griffiths killed and ate three women, two cooked and one raw, according to his own account." The full story is [here](#). If the story suggests a lack of vigilance, the authorities in Italy seem to have moved to the other extreme. According to [this news report](#), "Italian government officials have accused the country's top seismologist [and six other scientists] of manslaughter, after failing to predict" a deadly 2009 earthquake. This notwithstanding the fact that, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, no major earthquake has *ever* been accurately predicted.