

# WORLD & NATION

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

Costa Rica

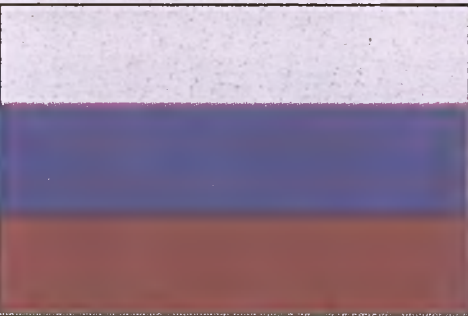
CARIBBEAN FOOTHILLS



Dr. Brian Kubicki, a Minnesotan scientist in Costa Rica, has found a new species of frog that looks remarkably like The Muppet's host, Kermit the Frog, according to CBC. The frog, which is a species of glass frogs, has large, white eyes and a translucent belly, through which its organs can be seen. It has been named *Hyalinobatrachium diana*. It has a distinctive call and coloring that separates it from the other 14 varieties of glass frog native to Costa Rica.

Russia

Moscow



For the first time in six years, the Russian economy has shrunk, according to the BBC. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced that in the first three months of 2015, the Russian economy had shrunk 2 percent. The downturn has been largely due to international sanctions following the annexation of Crimea by Russia last year and the falling price of oil. Sanctions alone, according to Medvedev, have cost the country \$26 billion in foreign exports, and may be several times that by the end of the year.

Egypt

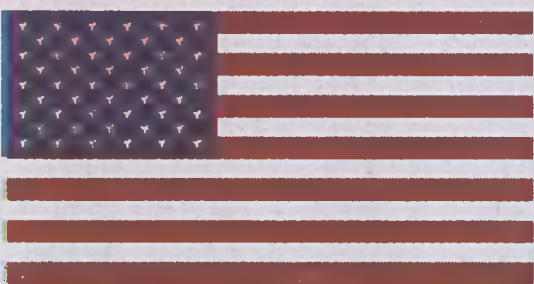
CAIRO



Mohamed Morsi, the deposed Egyptian president, has been sentenced to 20 years in prison for the killing of protesters, according to The Guardian. He, along with 14 other co-defendants from the Muslim Brotherhood, was also acquitted of a murder charge that might have earned them the death penalty. Morsi was ousted by the military in 2013, after a year in office. "This verdict shatters any remaining illusion of independence and impartiality in Egypt's criminal justice," said Amnesty International's deputy director for the Middle East, Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

United States

WASHINGTON, DC



Michele Leonhart, the head of the Drug Enforcement Administration, is resigning following a report that DEA agents attended cartel-funded sex parties in Columbia, according to Vice news. The Department of Justice, who conducted the report, said that the DEA was aware of the parties, was not co-operative with the investigation, and redacted some details from the report. There is some concern that the parties may have been arranged by cartels, who paid for the prostitutes, in order to obtain information. A congressional investigation will be forthcoming.

BY ABE KENMORE  
WORLD & NATION EDITOR

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## Wrongful conviction lawsuit filed against Greensboro police

BY THOR TOBIASSEN  
STAFF WRITER

What is the value of 17 years of a person's life?

The city of Greensboro may soon have to reckon with that question. LaMonte Armstrong, who spent 17 years in prison for a murder he did not commit, has filed a lawsuit against the city of Greensboro and the Police Department, alleging misconduct by police and prosecutors.

"Investigators based their case on an informant they knew was unreliable and untrustworthy," said the brief filed by Armstrong's attorneys. "(He) withheld exculpatory evidence from the prosecutors and from Armstrong and participated in the fabrication of inculpatory evidence that they knew, or reasonably should have known, was false."

In 1995, Armstrong was convicted of the 1988 murder of North Carolina A&T State University professor Ernestine Compton and sentenced to life imprisonment.

From the beginning, Armstrong maintained his innocence. After he wrote to the Duke Law Innocence Project, the wrongful convictions clinic at Duke Law School encouraged the Greensboro Police Department to reopen the case.

Investigators retested a handprint found near the body and matched it to Christopher Caviness, a convicted murderer who died in 2010. Armstrong was released from prison in 2012 and officially pardoned by Governor Pat McCrory in 2013.

It is unknown exactly how much recompense Armstrong

seeks. Theresa Newman, an attorney who worked to free Armstrong, told The Guilfordian that Armstrong applied for statutory compensation. Under state law, a wrongfully imprisoned person can receive \$50,000 per year of time served, up to a maximum of 15 years. Armstrong applied for and received the full \$750,000 maximum.

Asked why Armstrong had chosen to pursue further compensation from the state, a source who wanted to remain anonymous due to their relationship to the case told The Guilfordian that more than money is at stake.

"Someone loses 17 years of their life to prison," said the anonymous source. "There's accountability that needs to be assessed. There needs to be an acknowledgement that what was going on was wrong and that what happened to (Armstrong) was wrong. Those things are the purpose of the suit. (While) money is the way those damages are measured under our system, that's far from the sole, or primary, motivating factor."

Armstrong, who knew Compton, was questioned by police after the murder but was quickly let go.

The lawsuit alleges that investigators omitted possibly

exculpatory information from the file provided to the district attorney, including that key witness Charles Blackwell was known to the police as a habitual liar and changed his story several times over the course of the investigation.

City attorney Tom Carruthers, speaking to the Greensboro News & Record, emphasized the city and the Police Department's cooperation with the Innocence Project.

"The most important thing is for us to fully understand why this happened," said Carruthers. "That's why we cooperated with the Innocence Project, and that's why we provided the entire criminal file to Armstrong's attorney before the lawsuit."

Newman agrees that police and prosecutors were cooperative when the Innocence Project asked for Armstrong's case to be reopened but says that the increasing frequency of overturned convictions has, in some cases, led to less cooperative attitudes from district attorneys' offices.

"In our exonerations, it's always occurred with different levels of cooperation from the district attorney's office," said Newman. "It's becoming more difficult to get that cooperation now. (You) can do two things in

"The most important thing is for us to fully understand why this happened."

TOM CARRUTHERS, GREENSBORO CITY ATTORNEY

that situation: you can become much more involved and open in investigating whether wrongful convictions have occurred or you can become much more resistant.

"(In) some prosecutorial districts, we are seeing more resistance to overturning convictions."

Wrongful conviction lawsuits can be painful for city pocketbooks.

In June 2014, a group of wrongfully convicted black men known as the Dixmoor 5, who were accused of fabricating confessions to convict the men of the rape and murder of a 14-year-old, received a \$40 million settlement from the Illinois State Police.

Also in 2014, the city of New York settled for \$41 million with the Central Park Five, five minority men who were wrongfully convicted of a much publicized sexual assault on a jogger in Central Park.

Newman believes that a judgment or settlement in Armstrong's favor is definitely possible.

"When I look at what happened, I certainly hope that these kinds of facts support recovery in a civil suit," said Newman. "I'm optimistic. I believe there's sufficient evidence to support recovery."

## Elements of voter laws deemed illegal

### FOURTH-CIRCUIT COURT RULING ACCEPTED

BY NICOLE ZELNIKER  
FEATURES EDITOR

Young adults make up 13 percent of voters in North Carolina, but 16 percent of young adults have no form of North Carolina photo ID, according to Democracy North Carolina.

Black people make up 22 percent and women 54, yet 31 percent of blacks and 66 percent of women have no North Carolina photo ID.

On April 6, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review a law that has eliminated same-day registration, shortened early voting and required a North Carolina voter ID to vote in North Carolina.

"We have this law because of voter fraud, but the amount of voter fraud (is) so minuscule," said sophomore and North Carolina native Leah Whetten-Goldstein. "You're hurting so many people, preventing them from voting."

According to North Carolina Republican Governor Pat McCrory, this law ensures the integrity of the voting process.

"Even if the instances of misidentified people casting votes are low, that shouldn't prevent us from putting this non-burdensome safeguard in place," said McCrory, according to the Huffington Post.

He is not alone. "Unless you're like a wizard hermit in the woods, I don't understand," said senior and Guilford College Republicans President

Harrison Houlihan. "I would feel bad if that wizard hermit couldn't vote, but (it) just seems intuitive that you need an ID to perform our most sacred civic duty."

In North Carolina, there have been no cases of voting fraud on public record, though over 300,000 North Carolinians have no form of ID that would be accepted under this law, according to "North Carolina Will Determine the Future of the Voting Rights Act in The Nation," an article by Ari Berman.

"I can count on one hand the number of legitimate voter fraud cases in our over 200 years of history," said Assistant Professor of Political Science Robert Duncan.

The law was passed in 2013 by McCrory. "It illustrates the power that the conservatives have," said Duncan. "They're making it more and more difficult to vote."

The Supreme Court's refusal to review the case means that the ruling of the lower federal court will stand. The Fourth Circuit court ruled that several elements of the voting law were illegal.

"The court's order (was supposed to) safeguard the vote for tens of thousands of North Carolinians," said director of ACLU's Voting Rights Project Dale Ho in a statement. "It (meant) they could continue to be able to use same-day registration, just as they have during the last three federal elections."

According to the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, this law disproportionately affects women and people of color.

"We always oppress folks of color, but the ways in which that happens manifests itself in different ways throughout history," said Assistant Professor of Justice and Policy

Studies Krista Craven. "It's hard to shake that legacy of marginalizing certain groups."

College students and young people are also overwhelmingly affected.

"Who's the most likely to want to register and vote in the same day?" said junior and North Carolina native Rachel Wieselquist. "Who's the procrastinating public of the United States? It's young people. Not voting is not the answer. We need to make it clear to them that these restrictions are not going to stop us from voting."

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, a hundred thousand North Carolinians voted early in 2012. Approximately one third were African-American.

"We are suppressing the voice of folks of color," said Craven. "We're just using these other tools that (are) prevalent, particularly in the southern U.S."

Of course, the fewer people who can vote, the fewer people that will.

"I've always thought that when you talked about the integrity of elections, you talked about getting as many Americans to vote as possible to participate," said Associate Professor of Political Science Ken Gilmore. "How much integrity does an election have when 20 percent of the people vote?"

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