

Camera-Wielding Citizens

Legislative Judiciary Committee approves a measure that would stop cops from hassling people who are taking pictures or shooting video of police in action. The measure makes officers legally liable if they interfere with camera use without proper cause. The measure now goes before the full General Assembly.

Hubert Thompson

Forty-four-year-old Hartford man convicted of a 1998 rape was released from prison this month after testing found that DNA on the victim's clothing doesn't belong to him. Thompson was released on a promise to appear April 26 in Hartford Superior Court and was granted a new trial. His defense during his initial trial was that the victim wrongly identified him in a photo lineup. The case has been cited during recent hearings at the Capitol on a bill that aims to enhance eyewitness identification in criminal cases.

David Avignor

New Haven attorney pled guilty in federal court to making false statements on a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development form in connection with a real estate closing. Authorities say he collected \$160,000 for the sale of a house, but instead of disbursing all the money to the seller, as he told HUD, Avignor directed about \$49,000 to a fictitious construction company set up by ex-law partner Morris Olmer. More than a dozen people have been convicted or have pled guilty in connection with a widespread mortgage fraud scheme.

Go Figure**68**

Percentage of Connecticut residents, according to a Quinnipiac Poll, who favor legalizing marijuana for medical use. The legislative Judiciary Committee last week approved a bill that would create a system for licensing medical marijuana producers, dispensing the drug and registering qualified patients.

Lawyers Use Dollars To Vote For Dems

In the not-shocking-but-interesting department, the Associated Press weighed in last week with a study showing how lawyers are donating big bucks to Democrats running for U.S. Senate in Connecticut, but are giving relatively little to GOP contenders.

At the forefront is the Bridgeport firm of Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder, whose lawyers have contributed about \$30,000 to U.S. Rep. Christopher Murphy. Partner Michael Koskoff, whose firm focuses on medical malpractice cases, said restrictions on lawsuit damage awards favored by many Republicans are one factor, but he added that Murphy is a family friend.

In fact, Murphy benefited the most from lawyer largesse, according to campaign finance records, with \$445,000 in contributions — about 16 percent of the \$2.75 million total — coming from people who described themselves as lawyers or attorneys.

Democratic rivals Susan Bysiewicz, the former secretary of the state, and William Tong, a state representative, received \$331,000 and \$170,000, respectively, from lawyers. The Senate seat is now held by Joseph Lieberman, a Democrat-turned-Independent, who is retiring.

As for Republicans, former U.S. Representative Chris Shays received about \$24,000 from attorneys and Linda McMahon received \$21,000.

Stewart Casper, former president of the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, said Murphy's opposition to caps on damages was one reason he gave to the candidate. But he also said he was motivated by other issues, such as Republican measures he called anti-consumer.

"There are a whole host of reasons related to the law that would prompt lawyers to contribute more heavily to the Democratic Party than the Republican Party," Casper told the AP.

Ex-Lehman Official Charged With Forgery

Being former managing director of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. looks sketchy enough on your résumé in the wake of the Great Recession. Now things appear even worse for Bradley H. Jack — he's been twice charged with prescription forgery in Connecticut.

According to Bloomberg news, the ex-banker — he actually left Lehman Brothers pre-meltdown, in 2005 — was arrested this month and charged with second-degree forgery for allegedly altering the date on a prescription for an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder drug that he attempted to obtain from a Westport CVS in November. He's pleaded not guilty.

Jack's explanation? He had to travel abroad and all the time zone changing got him off kilter with his pill taking. He told authorities he ran out of



The Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut recently held its 2012 annual conference in Hartford. Pictured, from left, are participants Paul Slager, a partner in the law firm of Silver Golub & Teitell and vice president of the BIAC Board of Directors; conference keynote speaker Jennifer Field; and Julie Peters, Executive Director of BIAC. Silver Golub & Teitell, based in Stamford, was the presenting sponsor of the conference.

Verbatim

"It is not applied impartially across racial and economic lines, it is irreversible yet sometimes issued to innocents, and it is also a fundamental contradiction — killing as a punishment for killing."

— State Senator Eric Coleman,

co-chair of the legislature's Judiciary Committee, reacting to the panel's vote on a bill that would abolish the death penalty for any murder committed after the legislation is passed. The bill now goes before the full General Assembly.

the ADHD drug four days early and didn't think his doctor would mind if the prescription were refilled ahead of schedule. The CVS store called the doctor, who apparently did mind.

Jack was also arrested last June after he allegedly tried to pass forged prescriptions for Ritalin and Oxycontin, Fairfield police said. His attorney, Robert Golger, said Jack had been treated for cancer and had a valid prescription in the past. After that arrest, Jack entered accelerated rehabilitation, a type of probation in which first-time offenders are spared jail time if they avoid legal trouble for one year.

How will the latest arrest affect Jack's AR? New Haven defense attorney Max Simmons, who has no connection to the case, told

Bloomberg he thought Jack "would be found to be in noncompliance with AR and that case would be brought forward on the docket ... and he would face both charges at the same time. That's pretty commonly how it's handled."

No Hard Feelings Over Fraud Lawsuit

We have all heard the expression about politics making strange bedfellows way too many times. But wow, it does fit this situation.

Back in 2009, then-state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal filed suit against anti-prostitution crusader Raymond Bechard, who had self-published a book about the exploitation of girls by sex traffickers. He had also launched a charity, Ahava Kids.

Blumenthal had accused Bechard of paying at least \$67,000 in charitable funds to several companies based at his Old Saybrook home for non-existent services. The suit also stated that Bechard claimed that his charity donated to other nonprofits, but no such donations were made.

Fast-forward to last week. As reported by the Connecticut Mirror web site, Blumenthal attended a news conference to back a legislative bill that would stop alternative weeklies and other publications from running thinly disguised ads for prostitution. "Anyone who says it's a victimless crime is just plain wrong," Blumenthal said.

And the man who pushed state lawmakers to take up the measure? The man who helped draft the language? One of a handful of folks involved in the news conference?

Yes, that would be Bechard. He claims there was never any fraud, that he was guilty only of sloppy bookkeeping. The state Attorney General's Office didn't respond to that characterization, but says it's negotiating a settlement.

Bechard isn't holding any grudges against the former AG. "Blumenthal has been extraordinarily helpful to the cause. For him to show up today [at the press conference] was just great." ■

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