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# National News

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## U.S. high court takes Virginia death row case

The U.S. Supreme Court announced on April 5 that it will take up the appeal of Virginia death row inmate Terry Williams, who was scheduled to be executed April 6. The court had stayed Williams's execution April 2. The appeal was taken on two grounds: first, the appropriateness of the Virginia Supreme Court denying Williams a new sentencing hearing, since the first one did not present mitigating evidence showing that he was retarded; and second, whether the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals applied too stringent a standard in reviewing (and upholding) the Virginia high court's decision. The U.S. Supreme court is expected to hear the case next year.

In an interview with this news service before the Supreme Court had stayed Williams's execution, Henry Heller, Director of Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, had pointed to Williams's case as one of outright innocence. Williams has fetal alcohol syndrome, and confessed to the murder for which he was convicted because he dreamed he had killed the victim six months after the victim's death, which a coroner had ruled was caused by injuries he suffered from a fall while intoxicated.

Williams is one of seven men slated to be executed between March and April in Virginia. The execution binge has sparked anti-death penalty protests in the state, with one planned on the date of each of the remaining four executions.

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## Congressman: Buddhists worship freely in Tibet

In the widely read "Washington Whispers" column in the April 12, 1999 *U.S. News & World Report*, the following brief item appeared:

"Au Contraire: China's repression in Tibet is less than meets the eye, says witness Rep. Matt Salmon, Arizona Republican. 'I was told that things were very repressive there, but I've got to say the countenance of

the people seemed pretty good, pretty happy,' reports Salmon, a former Mormon missionary who speaks fluent Mandarin and who just returned from the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. Contrary to reports of widespread religious persecution, Salmon says he saw and spoke to 'hundreds upon hundreds' of Buddhist monks worshipping in 'an unfettered way.' "

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## McDougal case: Starr gang put on defensive

Susan McDougal has put Kenneth Starr's prosecution on trial in her trial for criminal contempt, which held closing arguments on April 7. McDougal succeeded in overriding prosecution objections in order to call Julie Hiatt Steele as a defense witness. Steele was vindictively indicted by Starr after she contradicted Kathleen Willey, who is one of Starr's cooperating witnesses in his sex investigation against the President. In her testimony on April 2, Steele told the jury how Starr's office had pressured her to back up Willey's story, and that she is now in massive debt, faces losing her home, and has seen friends and relatives harassed because she wouldn't lie as Starr wanted her to do.

Steele herself is scheduled to go to trial in Alexandria, Virginia, on May 3, and her decision to testify in another case before going on trial herself, is highly unusual.

Prosecutors were stunned when the judge allowed McDougal to call Steele as a witness. "This is mammoth," proclaimed Mark Barrett, one of Starr's assistant prosecutors. "I think we've been on the defense since the case began," Barrett told reporters outside the Little Rock Federal courthouse, "but this is a different level." During a hearing without the jury present, Steele said that Starr's deputies had indicted her for making false statements even though she had told the truth. This is exactly what McDougal had feared for herself, and the judge acknowledged that Steele could testify in front of the jury to help McDougal's lawyers show the jury the *modus operandi* of Starr's office.

Showing how much they have been thrown on the defensive, prosecutors had to put one of their own on the witness stand on

April 5, as a rebuttal witness. Ray Jahn, one of the Whitewater prosecutors against McDougal in 1996, was compelled to acknowledge that Starr's strategy, as of 1994, was: "Convict Mrs. McDougal and then basically roll her over on the President." But a few minutes later, Jahn testified that when he first interviewed for the job, he had said that he didn't think convicting the President would be good for the country.

On April 6, prosecutors asked the judge to include in his jury instructions the following statement: "Please remember that this defendant, not anyone else, is on trial here." Barrett said later, "It's to remind the jurors who the defendant is. It's Susan McDougal, in case they forgot."

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## California Green Party wins one assembly seat

Green Party candidate Audie Bock won a special election in April to the California State Assembly, defeating former Oakland Mayor Elihu Harris (D), in a stunning upset. Harris was attempting to win back the seat he had held for 12 years, before serving eight years as Oakland's Mayor. In the February primary, Harris defeated a strong challenge from Democrat Frank Russo. In the runoff campaign, Harris spent \$300,000, but did little actual campaigning. He was defeated by Bock, by 300 votes.

While the press portrays this as an example of what an aggressive, attractive third party candidate can do when a major party candidate takes an election for granted, some California Democrats point to current Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown (D) as key to Bock's victory. Brown is the former radical environmentalist Gov. Jerry "Moonbeam" Brown. Now, as Oakland's mayor, he has made the idiotic proposal to turn the roofs of houses in Oakland into gardens, fertilized by recycled human waste. He has also said that Oakland should get rid of its port, which he alleges is a major source of pollution.

Although the Assembly District won by Bock is overwhelmingly Democratic, and only 1.2% of its voters are registered with the Green Party, Brown's supporters backed Bock, and engaged in a campaign to undermine Harris.