

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

October 25, 2007

On my mind this month...



Hon. Amy N. Dean

JAC is a gem that has been a bit under the radar for a number of years and it's time for a major coming out party. This can only be accomplished if every JAC

member gets involved, talks about the organization to friends and encourages those in our respective zones of influence to join JAC and come to our meetings, especially our annual meeting this March.

This is not a tough sell. What other political organization addresses our concerns -- Israel, choice and separation of religion and state? Trust me -- NONE. Elected officials look to JAC membership to articulate their experiences to our communities and to explain to them the concerns of our membership. Our trips to DC are substantive -- an opportunity to actually talk to and engage elected officials on the matters we hold most dear.

Let's not forget our fundraising prowess. JAC is in the trenches and is a recognized leader in helping candidates get their message out to voters. We do this with PAC monies as well as by reaching out to our membership to individually help where and when they are able.

JACPAC is a labor of love. I want to thank Jackie Cohen for her work as President, and I am grateful to Marcia Balonick, Joy Malkus and Linda Sher for their patience and help in getting me on board and up to snuff. However, they and I cannot do it alone. We need your help.

I look forward to talking with any of you who want to speak with me and working with you. I can always be contacted at jueza@aol.com

✪ Israel

Israel, the Palestinians, and maybe some other Arab countries are set to meet next month at a summit in Annapolis. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is shuttling back and forth between Jerusalem and Ramallah to help Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams craft a joint resolution which will address the "core issues." PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas wants specifics and his opening demand is for a complete Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 Armistice lines, including Jerusalem -- 6,250 kilometers comprising the West Bank and Gaza. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni have been working over the past year to get Abbas to concede on the refugee "right of return" issue. Olmert considers the "right of return" the deal breaker, the single major threat to Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. The *Jerusalem Post* says that Olmert and Livni "are correct in principle." The issue is a "non starter politically and diplomatically...there is a 'wall to wall' agreement in Israel rejecting the 'right of return' to Israel." And there is broad international opposition to the "flooding of Israel with Palestinian refugees." President George W. Bush's letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2004 assigned a future Palestinian state, not Israel, as the address of the refugees and senior Quartet officials also supported a return of Palestinian refugees only to a Palestinian state. The two other "core" issues, borders and Jerusalem, are just as critical to Israel's future and mean that there will be a very difficult diplomatic fight ahead. Senior Palestinian officials close to Abbas told the *Post* that Abbas "cannot and will not accept less than a full Israeli retreat to the pre-1967 borders." Most Israeli analysts see only dim prospects for the Annapolis conference. Palestinian President Abbas lacks authority and control. Prime Minister Olmert's coalition threatens to come apart as the result of bad strategic judgments, criminal investigations

(Israel, continued on reverse side)

🇺🇸 United States

CHOICE

As of October 18, hospitals in Pennsylvania must provide women who have been raped or sexually assaulted with emergency contraception. Officials from the state Department of Health, which pushed for the new rules, said hospitals that claim an exemption must inform victims of the availability of emergency contraception -- a drug known as Plan B -- and arrange for transportation to a facility that provides it. Plan B supporters contend that state officials should have pushed for a tougher alternative: requiring hospitals with religious objections to bring in a contractor to dispense Plan B. "When you start talking about transporting a woman who has been raped, it's very problematic," said st. Rep. Daylin Leach, "If this was your daughter lying on a hospital gurney, bloody and hysterical after being raped, would you want that for her?" Leach and other proponents of Plan B want the drug available at hospitals because it is more effective the sooner it is taken. The bill, however, faces an uphill battle. (*Philadelphia Inquirer* 10/19/07)

SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE

On October 12, Illinois lawmakers voted 74-37 to override Gov. Rod Blagojevich's veto and require students to observe a moment of silence at the beginning of each school day. Supporters of the legislation, backed by Concerned Christian Americans and the Illinois Family Institute, said "it would help young people come to terms with the everyday stresses in their lives."

Rep. Lou Lang, who voted against the plan, replied, "It may not mandate prayer, but that's what it's about." The law takes effect immediately and builds upon a 1969 law that granted teachers the option of a brief period of silence at the start of each school day. Now it will be a requirement. Michael Vaughn, a Chicago Public

(Separation, continued on reverse side)

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Research & Races

HOUSE 2008

Illinois - GOP Rep. Jerry Weller (IL-11), facing questions about his ethics, announced that he will not seek an 8th term. Weller is the third member of the Illinois House delegation to announce his retirement. GOP Reps. Dennis Hastert (IL-14) and Ray LaHood (IL-18) are also not running for reelection. Although Weller's district "leans GOP" and he won with 55% in 2006, changing demographics could give Democrats a pickup opportunity and a strong Democratic candidate would mean a tight competitive race.

Massachusetts - On October 18, Niki Tsongas was sworn in as a member of the Massachusetts House delegation, the first woman in 25 years. She won a special election to finish the term of Dem. Rep. Martin Meehan, who resigned to become the chancellor

of the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. Tsongas is the widow of former Sen. Paul Tsongas, who also held this House seat before moving to the Senate.

New Jersey - No New Jersey House incumbent lost a seat in 2006, but several challengers hope to change that in 2008. Two districts are heating up already. In the 7th, held by four-term GOP Rep. Mike Ferguson, Assemblywoman Linda Stender, who held Ferguson to 49% in 2006, is back for a rematch. Stender lost by less than 3,000 votes. Thirteen term GOP Rep. Jim Saxton (NJ-03) is being opposed by state Sen. John Adler. Bush narrowly won the district 51-49% in 2004. Adler has shown some good fundraising skills since his announcement on September 20.

Ohio - GOP Rep. David Hobson is the third Ohio member to announce that he's leaving the House. Hobson has represented Ohio's 7th district for 17 years and is a senior member of the Appropriations Committee. This is a GOP leaning district but two Democrats have already declared. Ohio elected a Democratic Governor and a Democratic Senator in 2006, so anything can happen.

Wyoming - Gary Trauner (D) who held GOP Rep. Barbara Cubin to 50% in 2006, announced that he will run again in 2008. Trauner lost by just one half of one percent. Cubin has missed dozens of votes this year while recovering from a broken foot and attending to her husband, who has been hospitalized. She has not announced her 2008 plans.

Right Wing Watch

Earlier this month, Senator and Presidential candidate John McCain, brought about sharp criticism from Jewish organizations after saying in an interview that he would rather see America led by a Christian, and "that the Constitution established the United States of America as a Christian nation." McCain was asked if a Muslim candidate could be a good president and he replied, "I just have to say in all candor that since this nation was founded primarily on Christian principles...personally I would prefer some-

one who I know has a solid grounding in my faith." Both the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee asked McCain to withdraw his remarks. AJC's general counsel Jeffrey Sinensky said, "To argue that America is a Christian nation, or that persons of a particular faith should by reason of their faith not seek high office, puts the very character of our country at stake." McCain tried to recover from his remarks during a campaign swing in New Hampshire saying that the most qualified person could be president, no

matter his or her religion. "It's almost Talmudic," McCain said. "We are a nation that was based on Judeo-Christian values. That means respect for all of human rights and dignity. That's my principle values and ideas, and that's what I think motivated our founding fathers." (*Haaretz.com* 10/4/07) However, a blog entry on the Christian Coalition web site said, "Comments like 'America was founded on Christian principles' by Sen. John McCain just might make him president."

Separation, continued

Schools spokesman, said CPS officials will study the new law and try to figure out the best way to offer guidance to schools on how to comply. Among the concerns is what to do if a student begins openly praying.

The Government Accountability Office has drafted a report which details the shortcomings of the \$12.9 million DC Opportunity Scholarship program. The DC voucher program was de-

signed to send low-income children in the District to better-performing private schools. The program, the first federally funded K-12 scholarship program in the country, is in its fourth year with 1,900 students and 58 participating schools. The GAO report says that the program lacks financial controls and has failed to check on the accreditation of the participating schools. Two of the schools lacked occupancy

permits and at least seven were certified as child development centers but not as private schools. The report says that the schools were "largely allowed to self-report that they were in compliance with city regulations, increasing the possibility that students were being ill-served without proper oversight." Students in Ohio and Wisconsin are also taking part in similar programs. (*Washington Post*, 10/11/07)

Israel, continued

and the Winograd commission report. Egypt and Jordan will attend Annapolis; Syria has said it will not participate. Saudi Arabia has not confirmed its attendance.

Reps. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Christopher Carney (D-PA) are circulat-

ing a letter calling on President Bush to provide assurance that any plans to sell Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) technology to Saudi Arabia will not harm US forces or undercut Israel's qualitative military edge. "We understand the grave threat posed to the United States, Europe, Israel,

Turkey and others by the emergence of a nuclear Iran with ballistic missile capability. However, the Administration must guarantee to Congress' satisfaction that selling JDAMs to Saudi Arabia will not harm US forces or our democratic ally Israel. Without such assurances, we will oppose the sale."