

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

November 26, 2007

On my mind this month...



Hon. Amy N. Dean

It's hard to believe that Chanukah is here. Where has the year gone? I'm normally reflective at this time, but with the elections upon

us, I believe this holiday provides increased meaning and motivation.

The story is indelibly printed on our minds – the fight for Jewish identity in a time when blending into the greater society was demanded and enforced. What I think we need to focus on today is its connection to the concept of freedom. Freedom to be who we are, freedom to believe as we wish, freedom to walk in this world without fear of reprisal.

Let me suggest, however, that in this country, we are in jeopardy of losing the freedoms we have historically taken for granted. We are becoming accustomed to the ideas of warrantless searches, encroachments on civil rights, individuals chosen for positions in government based on their religious beliefs rather than their competence, rejection of those seeking haven on our shores – to name but a few. Regardless of party, these initial inroads should be seen as a threat to our quality of life.

This election cycle is very important. We, the members of JAC, are engaged and need to encourage others to be involved. We all know that the future of our way of life depends on it. Freedom and participation are the messages of Chanukah.

Happy Chanukah to you and your families. If you want to reach me just write jueza@aol.com.

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Israel

On Nov 12th, Saeb Erekat, chief negotiator for the PLO, rejected Israel's demand that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state. This was an issue one would have thought had been settled long ago. Yasser Arafat recognized Israel's right to exist in 1988. He signed the Oslo Accords in 1993. The PLO later ostensibly amended it to eliminate calls for Israel's destruction. Most recently, the Palestinians approved the road map, which again was based upon recognition of Israel's right to exist. Now, on the eve of the Nov 30th Annapolis peace summit, all of these claims of recognition are being called into question. Also, dozens of prominent Palestinian residents of Jerusalem published an appeal to PA President Mahmoud Abbas, asking him not to make concessions to Israel over Jerusalem in the upcoming talks. The full-page newspaper ad, signed by 108 prominent Jerusalemites, including top Christian and Muslim leaders, asked Abbas not to negotiate a deal that would "violate our national rights."

"Israel should return all of east Jerusalem, the area it captured in the 1967 Mideast War and annexed to its capital," said signatory Adnan Hussein, an adviser to Abbas on Jerusalem affairs.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that the starting point for all negotiations with the Palestinians will be the "recognition of Israel as a state for the Jewish people. "We won't have an argument with anyone in the world over the fact that Israel is a state of the Jewish people. Whoever does not accept this cannot hold any negotiations with me. This has been made clear to the Palestinians and the Americans. I have no doubt that Abu Mazen [Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas] and [PA premier Salam] Fayad are committed to prior agreements and want to make peace with Israel as a Jewish state,"

(Israel, continued on reverse side)

United States

CHOICE

In 2006, South Dakota voters overturned, by 55.5% to 44.4%, an almost total abortion ban, with the only exception being the life of the mother. This year, the South Dakota House passed a bill that would have allowed abortions to terminate pregnancies arising from rape or incest, as well as abortions to protect the health of the mother. The state Senate declined to take up the bill. Now, the national group, 40 Days for Life, is working to start a new ballot initiative to end abortion in South Dakota. 40 Days for Life organizes prayer vigils and distributes anti-abortion material door to door across the country. An e-mail update from the group to anti-abortion leaders said, "Every participant in the 40 Days for Life needs to be praying for SD as we once again take on Planned Parenthood and their big money machine." Pro-life interests are looking at both legislation and/or a ballot measure as possibilities. (*Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 11/4/07)

SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE

U.S. Catholic bishops on Nov. 14 overwhelmingly approved new moral guidelines for Catholic voters that prioritize ending abortion and warn that political choices could impact a person's salvation. The bishops have issued the election-year guidelines every four years since 1976.

"This document is a summary of Catholic teaching; it is not a voter guide," said Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of New York's Brooklyn Diocese. The guidelines originally said voters' choices could impact their "spiritual well-being." Bishops toughened that to say such choices "may affect the individual's salvation." The 40-page document highlights a range of issues -- such as war, economic justice and immigration. But it is clear that abortion, euthanasia and embryonic stem cell research top the list. (*Chicago Tribune*, 11/15/07)

(more Separation on reverse side)

Research & Races

The Presidential race is now less than a year away. It shows up on the front pages of our newspapers and headlines the morning and evening news. There is very little attention being given to the 435 House races and 33 Senate races that will determine the agenda for the next four years no matter who occupies the White House. As filing dates approach (Illinois' filing date has already passed), these races are jelling, and there some very interesting and important contests shaping up. There are 5 open Senate seats, all now held by Republicans - Colorado, Idaho, Mississippi, New Mexico and Virginia. It is likely that Idaho and Mississippi will remain in GOP hands, but the other three states will be "toss-up" races. As of this date, there are 17 open House seats now held by Republicans and 4 Democratic seats. Only one of the Democrats is retiring, Michael McNulty (NY-21); the other three are running for the Senate - Mark Udall in Colorado, Tom Allen in Maine, and Tom Udall in New Mexico. More GOP retirements are expected.

Senate Races of Interest to JAC

(States where the JAC-supported Senator does not have a difficult race are not listed here.)

Colorado - Rep. Mark Udall (D) vs. former Rep. Bob Schaffer (R)
This is an ideological match-up. Udall is the conventional liberal from Boulder; Schaffer the conventional conservative from Ft. Collins.

Louisiana - Sen. Mary Landrieu (D) vs. St. Treas. John Kennedy (R)
Kennedy switched parties earlier in the year to run against Landrieu. He was unopposed in his bid for a third term as state treasurer.

Maine - Rep. Tom Allen (D) faces **Sen. Susan Collins (R)**. Although both candidates meet JAC criteria, JAC has a long relationship with Collins and we stick with our friends.

Minnesota - Sen. Norm Coleman (R) vs. winner of Democratic primary. JAC will not be involved until the Democratic nominee is chosen.

New Hampshire - Former Gov. Jeanne Shaheen (D) vs. Sen. John Sununu (R). JAC supported Shaheen when she ran against Sununu in 2002 and lost by a very small margin. The current national outlook that favors Democrats should work in her favor.

New Mexico - OPEN (GOP Sen. Pete Domenici retiring). All three of New Mexico's reps want this seat. JAC has supported Dem. Rep. Tom Udall, but he will have primary competition. The GOP entries don't meet JAC's criteria.

South Dakota - Sen. Tim Johnson (D) vs. GOP candidate to be determined. If the GOP cannot get Gov. Mike Rounds into the race, Johnson should be safe.

Virginia - Fmr. Gov. Mark Warner (D) vs. fmr. Gov. Jim Gilmore. Neither candidate will have primary opposition. Polls show Warner leading Gilmore by a comfortable margin.

Right Wing Watch

Despite some news media reports to the contrary, the religious right is not dead. In fact, right wing political groups have raised more money than ever, reports Barry Lynn, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and they are quietly working to organize churches into a political machine that will line up behind a presidential candidate who makes the right promises.

"I wish I could say the Religious Right is dead," said Lynn, "In fact, it may be more powerful than ever. They know they are on the verge of full control

over the Supreme Court and one more appointment could lead to a high court reversal on church-state separation, reproductive rights and gay rights."

According to IRS filings analyzed by AU:

James Dobson's Focus on the Family took in \$142.2 million in 2006, a \$4.4 million increase over the previous year. (In addition, Dobson's Focus on the Family Action took in \$14.6 million in 2006.)

Tony Perkins' Family Research Coun-

cil took in \$10.3 million in 2006, an increase of over \$900,000 over the previous year. (FRC Action, an affiliated group, took in \$1.1 million in 2006.)

Don Wildmon's American Family Association took in \$16.9 million in 2006.

Alan Sears' Alliance Defense Fund took in \$26.1 million in 2006, an increase of \$4.1 million over last year.

TV preacher Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network took in \$236.3 million in 2005, a \$49.8 million increase over the previous year.

Separation, *continued*

In a positive development on the church-state separation scene, Utah voters on November 12th soundly defeated the state's voucher law. But enough voters (38 percent) favored vouchers for the referendum also to be seen as a call to improve public educa-

tion in Utah. GOP lawmakers who had pushed through the voucher law despite broad public opposition, may get their comeuppance at the polls next election day. Utahns for Public Schools, an alliance of educators and community groups that came together

to oppose vouchers, will stay together indefinitely to work on improving public education, group spokeswoman Lisa Johnson said. Utah has large class sizes and the lowest per-pupil funding of any state in the country.

Israel, *continued*

Olmert said he raised the importance of this issue during his talks with European and American officials, and their response had been positive. However, during talks in recent weeks between the Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams, the Palestinians

refused to include the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state in the shared declaration the teams are preparing, which will be made at Annapolis. Erekat's statement to Israel Radio did not seem to imply that refusal would waver ahead of the summit. Mean-

while, despite Palestinian claims that there is a crisis in the talks, Israel and the Palestinians exchanged drafts of the joint declaration that they are to present at the Annapolis summit. (Note: next month's *Newsbreak* will feature details of the summit)