

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

November 20, 2009

On my mind this month...



Barbara Bluhm-Kaul

The House passed HR 3962, a health care reform bill. It contains a provision that deals a blow to women's freedom and

privacy. The amendment, offered by anti-choice Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI), makes it virtually impossible for private insurance companies that participate in the new system to offer abortion coverage. This would have the effect of denying certain women the right to use their own personal private funds to purchase an insurance plan with abortion coverage — a new and drastic limitation on a woman's right to choose. Presently, more than 85 percent of private-insurance plans cover abortion services.

"If enacted, this amendment will be the greatest restriction of a woman's right to choose to pass in our careers," said Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO). Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) said the bill's original language barring the use of federal dollars to pay for abortions should have been sufficient for the opponents. "Abortion is a matter of conscience on both sides of the debate," Ms. DeLauro said. "This amendment takes away that same freedom of conscience from America's women."

Not wanting to kill health care reform, most pro-choice members of Congress voted to pass the bill anyway. But most have served notice that they intend to fight until Stupak is stripped from the final bill.

JAC is involved in this effort. We have begun sending action alerts and informational updates, holding phone-a-thons and attending rallies. Please be sure we have your email address by sending it to jacpac123@aol.com. Together we can help Congress achieve health care reform without sacrificing women and their health care needs.

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✪ Israel

Israel and the international community, including the U.S., are urging the Palestinian Authority "to back down from its threat to unilaterally declare a state without first concluding a peace agreement with Israel."

In its first official response to the Palestinian plan, the United States reaffirmed its commitment to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through negotiations. "It is our strong belief and conviction that the best means to achieve the common goal of a contiguous and viable Palestine is through negotiations between the parties," the U.S. State Department said in a statement on November 16. Palestinian officials have threatened to take the issue to the UN Security Council and have asked the European Union to back their plan. The EU is not on the Security Council, but EU members France and Britain are permanent council members that wield veto power.

"We will seek the support of all members of the international community, Saeb Erekat, a top advisor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, told reporters in Ramallah. U.S. Senators visiting Israel earlier this week said the United States would veto a Palestinian declaration of statehood in the UN Security Council. "It would be D.O.A. - dead on arrival," Democratic Sen. Ted Kaufman (DE) told a news conference in Jerusalem. "It's a waste of time."

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) said, "An essentially unilateral declaration of statehood was the one thing that would not move the stalled peace process forward...the only way to end the Middle East conflict was an agreement reached through bilateral negotiations." (*The Forward, Reuters*)

There are some good signs. The first-ever planned Palestinian city has a name – Rawabi – Arabic for "hills," and a construction price tag of \$350 million with funding from the government of Qatar. "At the heart

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🇺🇸 United States

CHOICE

Pro-choice organizations, including JAC, have launched a grassroots campaign to defeat the extreme antiabortion language in the House-passed health reform legislation. NARAL Pro-choice America delivered a petition to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid with over 97,000 signatures, collected in less than 72 hours. We need you to join with JAC in Washington on December 2 to make our voices heard.

The Senate health care reform bill, released Nov 18, restores funding for abstinence only education. The provision would restore a program called Title V, which, since the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, has allocated a yearly \$50 million in grants to abstinence only education programs. Obama let the program lapse in June. In September, GOP Sen. Orrin Hatch (UT) offered an amendment to restore Title V via health care reform, which squeaked through the Finance Committee with a 12-11 vote. A similar amendment, offered in the House by GOP Rep. Lee Terry (NE) died in committee. If the Senate language survives, the Title V program will be extended through 2014.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is directly involved in the abortion debate that is taking place in Congress. The church helped get more than 60 Democratic votes for the Stupak amendment. "We will work to persuade the Senate to follow the example of the House and include these critical safeguards in their version of health care reform legislation....Issues that are moral questions before they become political remain moral questions when they become political," said Cardinal Francis George, president of the Conference. The Catholic Church has called for a system of universal health care in the U.S. for almost a century, but the bishops said this fall that they would oppose any bill that expanded federal subsidies of abortion. It is clear they are not satisfied with current law

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Research & Races

2009 HOUSE

The two newest members of the House, both of whom will have to run again next November, are: Democrat John Garamendi (CA-10), elected to fill the remainder of the term of Dem. Ellen Tauscher, the new Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, and Democrat Bill Owens (NY-23), elected to serve the unexpired term of GOP Rep. John McHugh, the new Secretary of the Army. John Garamendi left the office of Lt. Gov. of California to run for the House. Bill Owens is an attorney who had not previously run for elected office.

2010 SENATE

California -- Former Hewlett Packard CEO and McCain advisor Carly Fiorina (R) formally launched her campaign to defeat Dem. Sen. Barbara Boxer. Fiorina will face a conservative primary challenger, Chuck DeVore, before she can get to Boxer. Fiorina set out to prove her conservative credentials this week - she questioned the

validity of global warming, supported the Stupak amendment, and advocated for an "enforcement-first" illegal immigration plan.

Connecticut--Political pundits rate 5-term Sen. Chris Dodd as the most vulnerable Democrat seeking reelection. Five Republicans have lined up for the nomination to face Dodd next November: former Rep. Rob Simmons declared early and was the establishment frontrunner; former World Wrestling Entertainment CEO Linda McMahon has already given her campaign \$3.5 million and has said she is willing to spend up to \$50 million; former Ambassador to Ireland Tom Foley has already hit the TV airwaves; st. Sen. Sam Caligiuri is traveling to visit local town committees to talk to potential delegates at the state convention; businessman Peter Schiff is the fifth Republican running. The GOP nominating convention will be held in May; Connecticut's primary is not until August.

Florida -- The Club for Growth formally endorsed former state House Speaker Marco Rubio (R) in Florida's Senate primary. National GOP leaders are backing Gov. Charlie Crist. The Club for Growth backed the conservative candidate in the recent special election in New York's 23rd district, forcing the moderate to withdraw before the election.

New Hampshire -- Three more Republicans have entered the race to replace retiring GOP Sen. Judd Gregg. Businessmen Jim Bender and William Binnie and former state Board of Education Chair Ovide Lamontagne have joined former state Attorney General Kelly Ayotte to seek their party's nomination. Rep. Paul Hodes, in his second term in Congress, is the only Democrat in the race. New Hampshire's primary is not until September, giving the winner of the primary only a very short time to run against Hodes. Gregg won with 66% in 2004, but President Obama won New Hampshire with 54% in 2008.

Separation of Religion and State

The South Carolina Christian vehicle license tag, "I Believe" with the image of a cross, authorized last year by the S.C. General Assembly, has been ruled unconstitutional by U.S. District Judge Cameron Currie. "State laws promoting one religion over others have been illegal in the United States since the nation's founding....Such a law amounts to state endorsement not only of religion in general, but of a specific sect in particular....The statute is clearly unconstitutional, and defense of its implementation has embroiled

the state in unnecessary (and expensive) litigation." No tags have been issued. A state Department of Motor Vehicles spokesman said the department will abide by the judge's decision. (www.newsobserver.com)

Oklahoma may soon have the country's only all-Christian prison, with Christian administrators, employees, counselors and programs. The \$42 million enterprise is spearheaded by Corrections Concepts, Inc., a Dallas nonprofit prison ministry. Bill

Robinson, the founder of Corrections Concepts is an ex-con and prison minister who says he has been working for years on the idea of an all-Christian prison. Robinson says "he possesses legal opinions that say that as a religious organization, the prison will be able to hire only people of like faith." If there are constitutional challenges, the American Center for Law and Justice, a major Christian law firm, has agreed to represent the ministry for free. (*Tulsa World* 11/2/2009)

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– the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal funding of abortions, except in cases of rape, incest or the life of the mother. The Catholic Church spends

no money on activities legally defined as lobbying, but several Catholic members of Congress received telephone calls, including House

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who was called by Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington.

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of this, it's about building a nation," says Bashar Masri, chairman of the board of the Bayti Real Estate Investment Company, which is running the project. "We have dreamed about a liberal, advanced state with a higher standard of living, and this project is part of those aspirations." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that economic prosperity in the

West Bank will pave the way for political peace. Since coming to office last March, Netanyahu has removed a series of checkpoints, helping to ease the movement of people and goods. Unemployment in the West Bank is 18%, down from 25% in 2004. Ramallah continues to grow. It has high end restaurants, a new chain of cafes, and cranes building high-rise buildings.

The planned city of Rawabi sits on Palestinian Authority controlled land, but developers are still awaiting final Israeli approval for the building of an access road, part of which will cut near a road used by Jewish settlers. But how the unstable Palestinian political situation and the impasse in peace negotiations will impact this progress on the West Bank is unclear.