

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

December 17, 2007

On my mind this month...



Hon. Amy N. Dean

We recently sent out an end of year reminder for those who have overlooked their renewal payment. With the Hanukkah derricks came a

letter from me about the challenges confronting us in the Presidential season. These challenges are real and to us all.

I am not unmindful of the fact that all of us are being approached to give the most we can to the Presidential campaigns. I, myself, had given to the maximum by March of this year to the candidate of my choice (no, I'm not going to make that pitch!). The concern is, however, that the focus is so great on these elections that the place where much of the work gets done, the Congress, is virtually being ignored. This cannot occur.

There are many freshmen in Congress, who support our issues of Israel, choice, and separation of religion and state, who are facing serious challenges in their districts because they are new and thus are viewed as vulnerable. JAC must be there to help them as we have in the past. To do this, each of us must submit our renewals for calendar year 2007 so JAC can respond to the requests we are receiving for those much needed dollars in these difficult economic times.

Please take a moment to go on the website to renew or use the card provided with our Hanukkah "lights" to respond to this call to action. JAC has always been there for its friends and we must do so again to insure that our issues are never in jeopardy of being undermined.

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Israel

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators began their first public peace talks since 2001 on December 12. The session was strained because of an Israeli construction project in East Jerusalem and new rocket attacks by Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip. Israel announced plans to build about 300 homes in the Har Homa neighborhood. Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, said the "Israeli project threatened to undermine hopes of reviving the peace process... either you choose a path of settlement and incursion and business as usual, or you choose peace." (*Los Angeles Times*, 12/13/07) The latest barrage of rocket fire into Israel by Gaza based militants also came on the 12th. This round followed an incursion by Israeli tanks and troops into the southern end of the strip in an effort to curtail the attacks which have been launched continuously. Last month in Annapolis, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert vowed to try to reach a peace settlement by the end of next year. Under the first track of the Road Map, the peace plan backed by the Quartet - U.S., E.U., Russia and the U.N. - Israel is obligated to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank and the Palestinians are committed to act against armed groups that continue to carry out attacks against Israel. Last month, Quartet envoy Tony Blair presented a plan for major international projects to aid the Palestinian economy. "It is a critical part of this process," Blair said, because without hope of prosperity and a rise in living standards... the politics will never succeed." A donors conference is set to convene next week, and Palestinian Prime Minister, Salaam Fayad intends to ask for \$5.6 billion over three years. (*Jerusalem Post*, 12/11/07)

Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni met with ambassadors from the European Union on December 13 and declared that Syria's role in the Mideast

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United States

CHOICE

There is a huge increase in prices for prescription contraceptives in health centers at hundreds of colleges and universities around the country. The price increases (300-400%) have also affected about 400 community health centers used by poor women nationwide. The increase is attributed to a provision in a federal law that ended a practice by which drug manufacturers provided contraception to the health centers at deeply discounted rates. College clinics are reporting sudden drops in the numbers of contraceptives sold and some clinics have stopped stocking certain prescription contraceptives, saying they are too expensive. In a 2006 study, 39% of undergraduate women said they relied on oral contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. Rep. Joseph Crowley, D-N.Y., has introduced a bill to undo the damage done by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, a bill intended to deal with Medicaid abuse. The fix will cost taxpayers nothing. The drug manufacturers would pay for any discounts, but would not be required to pay larger Medicaid rebates because of those discounts.

Antiabortion activists in several states are promoting constitutional amendments that would define life as beginning at conception. Such amendments would effectively outlaw all abortions and some birth control methods. *Roe v. Wade* was decided by the Supreme Court 35 years ago next month. Supporters of amendments that would grant personhood to "fertilized eggs, giving them the same legal protections as human beings," say that waiting for judges to overrule *Roe* isn't working. "The concept that we're going to elect judges who will change everything has failed," said Brian Rohrbough, a former president of Colorado Right to Life. "The logical thing is to start with personhood...It's the only legitimate tactic that does not involve a compromise." (*Los Angeles Times* 11/23/07)

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Research & Races

In just over ten months, the American people will elect a new President and a new Congress. All of the hype is centered around the Presidential election, but failure to support our friends in the House and Senate and to elect new members who share our point of view will result in a failed agenda, no matter who occupies the White House. As filing and primary dates approach, additional races will get JAC's attention. For now, these are the races that JAC is watching, and these are the people who need your help. To contribute to their campaigns, visit the JAC website www.jacpac.org/

Senate Races

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. state Treasurer John Kennedy (R) Kennedy switched parties earlier in the year to run against Landrieu. The latest polling shows Landrieu leading

Kennedy 46% to 42%, with a margin of error of 3.9 points. This puts the two candidates in a virtual dead heat.

New Mexico - Open (GOP Sen. Pete Domenici retiring). Democratic **Rep. Tom Udall**, (Colorado Mark Udall's first cousin), has the Democratic primary to himself while the two GOP members of Congress are fighting it out for their party's nomination. Udall is a five-term member who won his '06 re-election with 75%.

South Dakota - Democratic Sen. **Tim Johnson** fought a battle for his life this year and is back fighting for the people of South Dakota. JAC has supported Johnson since his years in the House and is excited that he is running for reelection. The Republicans have a primary, but so far, the top tier candidate they hoped to recruit, Gov. Mike Rounds, has declined to run.

House Races

Arizona - Two freshman Democratic representatives are top targets: **Harry Mitchell in AZ 05, Scottsdale, and Gabrielle Giffords in AZ 08, Tucson.** In 2006 Mitchell defeated a GOP incumbent. Giffords picked up an open seat held by the GOP for 20 years.

Illinois - Democratic **Rep. Melissa Bean (IL-08)** is in her second term. She represents a district that demographically favors the GOP. Her opponent is likely to be wealthy businessman Steve Greenberg, who faces nominal primary opposition. State Senate Majority Leader Debbie Halvorson is running for the open seat in the 11th district, which has been represented by a Republican for 14 years although it actually has 51% Democratic voter registration.

Kansas - Democratic **Rep. Nancy Boyda** surprised everyone by defeating GOP incumbent Jim Ryun with 51% in 2006. Now, Ryun is seeking a

rematch. Boyda is one of two Democrats in the Kansas delegation.

Massachusetts - Niki Tsongas won a special election on October 16 to fill the seat vacated by Rep. Marty Meehan, who resigned in July to become chancellor of University of Massachusetts. She has to run again in just ten months. She is the widow of former Senator and presidential candidate Paul Tsongas.

New Jersey - The 3rd district is an open seat created by the retirement of GOP Rep. Jim Saxton. State Sen. John Adler decided to run even before Saxton's announcement. This is suburban Philadelphia and Adler is well known to many JAC Philadelphia members.

Ohio - Freshman Democratic **Rep. Zack Space** won this seat with 62% in '06, but the GOP incumbent had already been indicted and Republicans could not come up with a strong candidate. It won't be as easy this time in a district that voted for Bush by

double digits in '04.

Pennsylvania - Freshman Democratic **Rep. Patrick Murphy** (D-PA-06) has both a military and a legal background and becomes animated when he speaks about his recent trip to Israel. He won in '06 with barely 50% and will be a target in '08.

Texas - JAC supported Democratic **Rep. Nick Lampson** in the '90s. Lampson was defeated after the GOP-engineered redistricting in '04, but he came back to win the seat formerly held by GOP Majority Leader Tom DeLay. Republicans want this seat back.

FYI

Two new members of the House were elected in special elections on December 11: Robert Latta (R) in OH-05 who replaces GOP Rep. Paul Gillmor who died on September 5 and Robert Wittman (R) in VA-01 who replaces GOP Rep. JoAnn Davis who died in early October.

Separation of Religion and State

The majority of the Polk County School Board, Lakeland, Florida, says it supports teaching intelligent design in addition to evolution in public schools. "If it ever comes to the board for a vote, I will vote against the teaching of evolution as part of the science curriculum," said Board member Margaret Loftin. "If evolution is taught, I would want to balance it with

the fact that we may live in a universe created by a supreme being as well." The current Florida state standards do not explicitly use the term evolution, stating instead that students should learn about "biological changes over time." The proposed new standards list evolution and biological diversity as one of the "big ideas that students need to know for a well-grounded

science education." Fighting the proposed standards could result in a costly lawsuit. Last year the courts barred the teaching of intelligent design in Dover, Pennsylvania, calling it "creationism in disguise," and the school district ended up spending more than a million dollars on court fees after losing the lawsuit. (the Ledger.com)

Israel, continued

was "unconstructive as it continued to supply weapons to Hizbullah, meddle in Lebanese politics and support terror organizations, including Hamas." As

long as that remains Syria's conduct, Israel cannot engage in negotiations. Livni urged the EU envoys to help push Syria "away from the 'Axis of

Evil' and bring it closer to moderate Arab countries. (Ynetnews.com 12/13/07)