On my mind this month...

For many Americans, the time to be involved in politics is only when there is an election, especially a presidential election. These days, when so many crucial decisions will be made by our elected officials, we can ill afford to be disengaged or uninterested. JAC works in the political sphere on behalf of the entire Jewish community. That work is possible because people like you who care about what we stand for keep us afloat during the “off-season.”

Actually, JAC does not have an off-season. There is work to be done day in and day out, all year, every year. Now is the time when we build relationships with the new members we helped elect, we develop a candidate support strategy for 2010 and we take a fresh look at the specific issues that will require our advocacy. At all times, we need to work with Congressional staffs to keep our issues in the consciousness of the Congress.

There are many ways to support JAC in these economically challenging times. One way to help is to make sure we have your email address. We save money when we can communicate with you electronically. And we promise you, no junk, and not too much information. You will still receive this Newsbreak by print and mail. Another way to help is to email us your carefully culled mailing lists, complete with email addresses, to help us increase our list of prospects. And you can make it a priority to come to the 2009 JAC Annual Meeting March 10-11. In the meantime, we wish you and your family a Happy Hanukkah and a happy, healthy New Year.

CHOICE

The Obama transition team is looking at how to undo the Bush Administration’s plan to finalize a regulation that will allow “a right of conscience for medical staff to refuse to participate in any practice they object to on moral grounds, including abortion but possibly birth control and other health needs as well.” Also, under review by the new administration is its response to several other abortion and reproductive health issues: whether to cut the funding of sexual abstinence programs; whether to increase funding for comprehensive sex education programs, including discussion of birth control; whether to allow federal health plans to pay for abortions; and whether to overturn particular regulations, such as the one that makes fetuses eligible for healthcare coverage under the Children’s Health Insurance Program. “We have a lot of work to do to fix the damage the Bush administration has done,” said Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America. It is expected that Mr. Obama will issue an executive order lifting President Bush’s restrictions on funding for embryonic stem cell research soon after he takes office. And, early action is also expected to abolish the “global gag rule,” which bars foreign organizations from using their own money for abortion services or advocacy if they accept U.S. aid for family planning. (WSJ.com 12/17/08).

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts conducted a survey of 70 hospital emergency rooms statewide asking if they could provide emergency contraception to rape victims, as required by a 2005 Massachusetts law. The answer was “No, we don’t do that, you know we’re a Catholic hospital” from Caritas St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center in Brighton and Caritas Holy Family Hospital in Methuen. “Both hospitals are part of Caritas Christi Health Care and owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. The church’s opposi-
**Research & Races**

**SENATE 2008**

GOP Incumbent Senator Saxby Chambliss defeated Democratic challenger Jim Martin by 57% on December 9. Georgia law requires that a candidate receive 50% of the vote to avoid a runoff. In November, Chambliss had received 49.8%, Martin 46.4%, and a third party candidate took approximately 3%. Democratic turnout for the runoff was very poor, especially in the African American community, which turned out in big numbers to vote for Obama. Minnesota's is the only 2008 Senate race that remains undecided.

**HOUSE 2008**

The following races are now decided:

- **California-04** - Republican Tom McClintock defeated Democrat Charlie Brown;
- **Louisiana-02** - Republican Joseph Cao defeated incumbent Demo-
crat William Jefferson;
- **Louisiana-04** - Republican John Fleming defeated Democrat Paul Carmouche;
- **Ohio-15** - Democrat Mary Jo Kilroy defeated GOP candidate Steve Stivers. LA-02 win was a takeover for the GOP; Ohio 15 was a pick-up for Democrats.

**APPOINTMENTS**

It is still questionable whether a sena-
tor will be appointed in Illinois or a special election will be held. In Colo-
rado, Democratic Governor Bill Ritter will make the appointment to fill
Democrat Senator Ken Salazar’s seat. In New York, Democratic Governor
David Paterson will choose the suc-
cessor to Senator Hillary Clinton. The appointed senators serve until 2010,
when elections take place for the full six-year term in Colorado and Illinois,
and in New York for the remainder of
Senator Clinton’s term, which is up in 2012.

**SENATE 2010**

Two GOP Senators have announced their retirements. Florida Sen. Mel
Martinez and Kansas Sen. Sam
Brownback will not run for reelection. Former Florida GOP Gov. Jeb Bush
is expected to run for the open seat. If
Bush makes a formal declaration, it is
likely he will have primary opposi-
tion. Several Democratic names have
been mentioned, but Bush will be a formidable opponent. He was a very
popular governor. In Kansas, Demo-
crats hope that Governor Kathleen
Sibelius will choose to run. Several
Republican names are circulating, in-
cluding all three GOP members of the
Kansas congressional delegation.

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**Separation of Religion and State**

On December 11, US District Judge
Cameron McGowan Currie ordered
South Carolina state officials to halt
production, sales, advertising and distri-
bution of the new license plates, featur-
ing a cross superimposed on a stained
glass window with the inscription
“I Believe” above the plate number
and the name of the state. Currie said
she issued the injunction because she
believed that federal courts would find
the law that created the plates “a gross
violation of the Constitution’s ban
on government establishment of religion.”
South Carolina Attorney General Henry
McMaster said he was “extremely
disappointed in the court’s ruling” and
believes that the plate is “completely
constitutional.” McMaster said he
would urge the state motor-vehicles and
corrections departments - the defen-
dants in the lawsuit challenging the plates - to appeal the injunction imme-
 diately. The case, Summers v. Adams,
is the second time that South Carolina
has had to defend a license plate cre-
ated by legislative fiat. In 2006, the 4th
Circuit ruled a plate with an anti-abor-
tion message unconstitutional because
it violated the First Amendment’s free
speech provision. However, that plate
is now available, sponsored privately
like other South Carolina plates. And,
if the “I Believe” plate is found to be
unconstitutional, it is likely that it will
be produced and distributed privately.

Oklahoma House Bill 1001, the “Re-
ligious Viewpoints Antidiscrimina-
tion Act,” allows students “to express
religious viewpoints in the classroom or
in assignments.” It prohibits students
from being penalized or rewarded for
the religious content of their work.”
The measure allows religious groups
or clubs the same access to school
facilities as secular groups. This is the
first bill filed for the 2009 legislative
session. It’s authors, Republican Reps.
Sally Kern and Mike Reynolds, say
that there is nothing new about this
bill. It seeks to clarify what is allowed
in public schools and to codify into
law what the U.S. Supreme Court has
decided regarding religion in schools.
A nearly identical bill was vetoed last year
by Governor Brad Henry. Henry said
that students are already allowed to ex-
press their faith and that “the bill could
subject school officials to an explosion
of costly and protracted litigation.”
Dr. Richard Broughton, an associate
professor of zoology at the Univer-
sity of Oklahoma and the president of
Oklahomans for Excellence in Science
Education, opposed the bill last year
and plans to do so again. “We think
that only science should be taught in sci-
ence classrooms...this is an attempt to
inject religion into science classrooms.”
(christianpost.com 12/3/08)

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**Israel, continued from page one**

order to lessen the impact onPalest-
inians living near its path. “Security
considerations will shape the new
route but must take into account
houses that have already been built
and not plans for future construction
within Israeli settlements.” Israeli
Chief Justice Aharon Barak wrote that
“Israel’s democratic nature forced it
to balance real security concerns with
a commitment to due process and hu-
man rights...a democracy must some-
times fight with one arm tied behind
her back.” (AIPAC Update 12/17/08)

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**Choice, continued from page one**

tion to contraception, including the
“morning-after pill” is well known.
However, Caritas said “it trains staff
to abide by the Massachusetts law”
and questioned whether the NARAL
researcher had spoken directly with
a member of the emergency depart-
ment staff of the two hospitals that
responded negatively. Andrea Miller,
executive director of Massachusetts
NARAL, said, “Our hope is that all
hospitals will be in compliance with
the law...this research will encourage
every hospital department to insure
that their staff is aware of the law and
trained to provide compassionate care
to rape survivors.” (The Boston Globe
12/18/08)