

# JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

January 28, 2008

## On my mind this month...



Hon. Amy N. Dean

Since the beginning of December I have been on the road to various places to participate in JAC chapter meetings. It has been a great pleasure to meet

the many dedicated and, needless to say, intelligent women who have committed themselves to JAC. It's a given that we are involved "political junkies" who work diligently for the candidates that support our issues. So I am a bit confused when I hear that members become upset when sent notices or invitations to events being hosted by other JAC members.

Certainly no one has to attend or contribute to the events or candidates who are being supported. We all have to pick our spots. But I, for one, think it's a testimony to our strength when we host events and disseminate that information to the national network. For that is what we are – a national network – and we should keep abreast of the activities going on around the country and applaud the fact that JAC is out there doing its job.

I understand that we do not support the same candidates for all the races. What difference does it make? As long as we are all in the "fray" working to make this country a better and (lately) freer place for all of us to live, what matters is that JAC members are actively providing their abilities to the political process. In fact, it is to our credit that we ARE working in different places and providing our insight and views to different candidates.

Next time you receive an e-mail or snail mail invitation which doesn't interest you, applaud the effort and while you may not agree, be determined to fight for the right to express the viewpoint.

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## Israel

A Hamas border guard stationed at the wall separating Rafah from Egypt told the British newspaper, *The Times*, that the mass breach of the wall was part of a well planned operation began months ago. Hamas operatives had been cutting into the steel wall with oxyacetylene torches for months, so that when explosive charges were attached on January 22, "the wall came tumbling down." Approximately 350,000 Palestinians poured through the breaches into Egypt. Israel's Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, said that the siege of the Gaza Strip will continue, and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told a conference that targeted killings of terrorist leaders in Gaza will continue. "Israel will use steps that affect the quality of life of Gaza's residents but take care to avoid a humanitarian crisis." The number of rockets and mortars fired from Gaza on the Israeli cities of Sderot and Ashkelon sharply escalated last week. And a Hamas sniper murdered a 20-year-old volunteer from Ecuador in the fields of Kibbutz Ein Hashlosha with a specialized snipers' rifle. White House spokesperson Dana Perino, speaking for the President, said Israel's action in closing the Gaza crossing points was "because it was sustaining upwards of 150 rockets falling on its territory a day. And so Israel is defending itself." Perino added, "the Palestinians are clearly seeing there is a choice that they can make, which is to live under the near humanitarian crisis that they have in Gaza, or the possibility of a Palestinian state." Counsellor Gilad Cohen delivered a statement to the U.N. Security Council on the 22nd. "The situation in the region did not develop overnight. It is the consequence of many choices, repeatedly the wrong choices, made by the Palestinians to adopt terrorism and violence over peace and negotiations with Israel...Israel made the choice to withdraw from the Gaza Strip...ever since then, Hamas has ruled the Gaza Strip...and since 2000, more than

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## United States

### CHOICE

A measure presented to the Kentucky General Assembly in January would require women seeking an abortion to undergo an ultrasound and review the results with their doctors. Physicians who do not comply could be fined up to \$100,000 for the first offense and \$250,000 for each subsequent offense. The measure has been assigned to the state's Senate Judiciary Committee. Currently, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi have passed laws with the ultrasound requirement. Arizona and Florida require ultrasounds after the first trimester. Said Kentucky Sen. Jack Westwood who proposed the bill: "I don't see how anybody would be opposed to allowing a woman to have as much information about what's going on in her body as possible." Elizabeth Nash, a public policy associate with the Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit research center on reproductive health, responded. "The bills are not designed to help a woman make an informed choice... they're designed to actively steer her away from choosing an abortion." Sen. Westwood says that physicians already do ultrasounds before an abortion and the legislation does not require anything more. "The woman still would have the right to avert her eyes...there's nothing that would require her to actually look at the ultrasound image." (*Lexington Herald-Leader*, Kentucky.com 1/14/08)

The California Assembly rejected a bill to require doctors to tell women seeking an abortion that fetuses can feel pain. The bill would have required the state Department of Health Services to write a brochure saying "there's evidence fetuses can feel pain from 20 weeks after conception." Doctors would have had to give the brochure to women wanting an abortion. Arkansas has a fetal pain law on the books. Previous attempts to pass such a law in California have failed. (KPBS News.org)

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# Research & Races

2008 can be a very confusing election year. We have been watching Presidential caucuses and primaries in several states so far and February 5 will bring additional primaries in 22 states. In most states these are only Presidential primaries, not Congressional, state or municipal primaries. As an example, Illinois has all its primaries on February 5. New York has its Presidential primary on February 5, but its Congressional and local primaries are not scheduled until September 9. It is as important that you vote in your Congressional, state and municipal primaries as it is that you vote in the Presidential. Find a complete listing of Presidential and Congressional primary dates on <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/2008pdates.pdf>. There are 35 Senate races and 435 House races. Twelve Democratic and 23 Republican seats are up in the Senate and all of the House is up for reelection. There are also currently 5 vacancies in the House, due to resignations and one death, 4 GOP seats, 1 Democratic seat. These will be filled in special elections before November. One Senate seat in Mississippi is currently held by former GOP Rep. and now Sen. Roger Wicker, appointed by the state's Governor when Sen. Trent Lott resigned. That seat will also be filled in a special election. There are 5 Open seats in the Senate, all currently held by retiring GOP Senators. And, 18 Open seats in the House, not including the 5 vacancies, 16 held by Republicans and 2 by Democrats. Open seats always offer an opportunity for a change in the party holding the seat because there is no candidate with the advantage of being a well known incumbent. As written up in past Newsbreaks, JAC is involved in two Open Senate races – Colorado and New Mexico – and will probably be involved in the Open seat in Virginia. The two Open seats in Idaho and Nebraska are not viable races for JAC. When it comes to House races, JAC always supports incumbents with difficult races before looking at Open seats or challengers. And, when there are contested primaries with more than one candidate whose positions agree with the PAC's criteria, JAC stays out until after the primary. Presently, JAC plans to be involved in three Open House races: California (12), Illinois (11) and New Jersey (3).

**California (12)** - This seat is held by Dem. Tom Lantos, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, an old friend of JAC's and the only Holocaust survivor to serve in the House. Rep. Lantos is leaving because of illness. Former st. Sen. Jackie Speier (D) is running for this seat. She shares JAC's values and is well known to JAC members in the San Francisco area. This seat favors Democrats, and Speier will be a positive addition to the California House delegation.

**Illinois (11)** - St. Sen. Debbie Halvorson is running for the seat currently held by GOP Rep. Jerry Weller, who is retiring after 7 terms. This is a swing district and offers a pickup opportunity for Democrats. Halvorson does not have a primary. There are three Republican candidates vying for the party's nomination. JAC met Halvorson at a "meet and greet" hosted by Rep. Jan Schakowsky last Fall. She is a strong candidate and good on all JAC's issues.

**New Jersey(3)** - St. Sen. John Adler had planned to run for this seat before GOP Rep. Jim Saxton announced his retirement. As was written in a previous Newsbreak, this district is suburban Philadelphia and many JAC members know him personally. Adler does not have a primary opponent which gives him a head start in the race. There are three Republicans running in the April 22 primary. Adler's positions on Israel, Choice and Separation agree with JAC's criteria.

## Separation of Religion and State

U.S. District Judge Robert W. Gettleman has halted enforcement of an Illinois law that requires public schools to hold a moment of silence every morning. The law was enacted in October, after the Illinois legislature overrode a veto by Gov. Rod Blagojevich. The Governor expressed concerns over the separation of church and state. Illinois resident Rob Sherman and his daughter Dawn, who attends a high school in Arlington Heights, filed suit and the matter is now in the courts. In his preliminary injunction, Judge

Gettleman said, "the statute would be constitutional if all it did was mandate silence...but it goes further, offering students a choice between prayer and thinking about activities of the day. Forcing children to make that choice may well violate the constitutional separation of church and state." The judge said he was worried about the law's impact on students of different religions. "The statute is vague as to what activities are permitted during the period of silence...It seems to the court that pupils would be permitted to

pray silently at their desks. But would a Muslim pupil be permitted to kneel on a prayer rug on the floor? Would a pupil be permitted to look at a Bible? Would a pupil whose religion requires chanting be permitted to pray, even though doing so would not be silent... Because of the statute's vagueness, the court is also concerned about possible violations of pupils' rights under the Free Exercise Clause." (*Church & State*, January 2008)

## Israel, continued

7,000 rockets and mortars have been fired at Israel. Most of these rockets fall on the southern city of Sderot where up to 94% of children suffer from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Why is the Council not concerned with the safety and security of Israel's children? I ask each Member of the Council: what would you do if London, Moscow, Paris or Tripoli was attacked and fired on? Would you sit

back and do nothing? Hamas controls the fate of Gaza. If terrorism ceases, life in Gaza will change. Peace begins with the people and their choices." (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1/22/08)

The Bush administration said it would sell 900 sophisticated satellite guided missiles to Saudi Arabia as part of a \$20 billion arms sale intended to bolster military relations with Saudi

Arabia and other Persian Gulf states and counter the rising influence of Iran. Israeli security sources responded by saying that the United States would provide Israel with better "smart bombs" than those it plans to sell Saudi Arabia. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, "We have spent a lot of time ensuring that we abide by our commitments to a qualitative military edge for Israel."