

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

Jan 26, 2011

On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

The rapid-fire pops of a Glock shattered the peaceful rhythms of a January Saturday. Within seconds, the news of a murderous rampage hit the airwaves and most of us were glued to our televisions. Once again, as a nation we were stunned and united by a senseless act of violence. Our feelings of a world undone were somewhat assuaged by the news that Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, felled by an assassin's bullet, was not killed as had been reported, but alive and fighting for her life.

Pundits, politicians and bloggers unleashed pent up indignation at Sarah Palin's cross-hairs map targeting certain candidates, at the ramped up anger of the Tea Party candidates during the mid terms and at calls "for taking back our country." They seized this moment to discuss the lack of civility in our political discourse.

It turned out these quick judgments were not the whole story. The shooter had a history of mental illness that, along with hate-mongering on the airwaves, may or may not have precipitated his actions. What we *do* know is words matter.

And guns matter. Until we insist politicians stand up to the NRA and enact laws against the sale of people-killing ammunition and weapons, mandate rigorous background checks on purchasers, and insist that guns do not belong in Starbucks and on college campuses, none of us are safe.

As Congresswoman Giffords begins her long recovery, let us show her our concern and love by advocating for a more civil society where words are measured and guns are regulated.

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Israel

Recently, Al Jazeera released secret diplomatic documents from a participant in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, concerning the Israeli peace talks. They are being dubbed "The Palestine Papers." These papers are leaked transcripts of the Bush administration negotiations between Israeli, Palestinian and American officials. These documents, coupled with the Palestinian request to have the UN Security Council condemn Israeli settlements, confuse even the most knowledgeable insider. The Palestine Papers accepted most of the settlements in Jerusalem as Israeli land.

The Palestinian leadership accepted East Jerusalem settlements as legitimate and understood that these blocs would become part of Israel under any reasonable peace agreement. At the same time these papers are being revealed, President Abbas is defying President Obama by requesting a UN Security Council resolution to condemn Israeli settlements. (*New York Times*, 1/20/11)

The United States and England have said they will veto the resolution if it comes to a vote. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, urging the Palestinians not to turn to the Security Council, argues that the Israelis and Palestinians need to settle their disputes directly. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon got into the fray when he said that Israeli settlements are illegal and hamper the peace process. (*Jerusalem Post* 1/21/11) 120 countries have signed onto the draft resolution.

As the United Nations and the Palestinians condemn building homes for Jewish residents in certain areas, the Palestine Papers reveal that the Palestinian leadership did not feel these housing blocs would derail the peace process. Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu continues to say that a two-state solution can be achieved as soon as security concerns are resolved. Many believe that land swaps can adequately deal with Palestinians and Israelis in different areas.

continued on page 2

United States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Reps. Chris Smith (R-NJ), Joe Pitts (R-PA) and Dan Lipinski (D-IL) have introduced H.R. 3, a bill which would ban coverage of abortion in the new healthcare system and impose tax penalties on Americans with private insurance plans that currently include abortion coverage. H.R. 3 would reimpose the ban on Washington, D.C.'s use of its own local funds for abortion for low-income women and codify the ban on abortion for women in the military even if paid for with their own funds. Currently, the Hyde amendment must be reauthorized every year. H.R. 3 would codify Hyde's ban on government funding and remove the rape and incest exceptions. Congressman Pitts is the new chair of the Energy and Commerce health subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over many women's health issues.

ACTION ALERT: Call your Representative (202-224-3121) and say that you oppose H.R. 3, "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act."

Clashes between Catholic hospitals and church authorities are on the rise. Economic pressures have brought about hospital mergers between religiously affiliated institutions and secular ones, with church directives imposed on the secular partner. To remain competitive, medical centers often evade or ignore the church directives. In Texas, a Catholic bishop made two hospitals cease performing tubal ligations for women who do not want to have more children. In Oregon, another bishop cast a medical center out of his diocese for refusing to discontinue the same procedure. In Arizona, a nun was excommunicated and her hospital expelled from the church after 116 years for allowing doctors to terminate a pregnancy to save a woman's life. The guidelines for Catholic hospitals, written in 1971, prohibit abortions and tubal ligations. Conflicts are expected to intensify as new issues arise, including the increase in infertility treatments and the availability of therapies derived from human embryonic stem cells. (*Washington Post* 1/19/2011)

Research & Races

2012 Senate

The current Senate lineup is 51 Democrats, 47 Republicans, and 2 Independents, who both caucus with the Democrats. Thirty-three Senators are up for reelection in 2012, 22 Democrats, 10 Republicans and 1 Independent. At this time, three of these Senators have announced that they will not run for reelection: Kent Conrad (D-ND), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Joe Lieberman (I-CT). JAC supported both Conrad and Lieberman in previous races. Seven JAC-supported women are running in 2012, 6 Democrats and 1 Republican.

California -- There is some speculation that Dianne Feinstein, who will be 79 in 2012, could choose to retire. She would be running for her 5th term and won with 59% in 2006. There are no announced opponents, but Meg Whitman, who lost the Governor's race to Jerry Brown in November, has said that she is not through with politics and could pose a credible challenge.

Maine -- GOP Senator Olympia Snowe will be running for her 4th term. She, and her fellow Maine Senator, Susan Collins, are now the only fully pro-choice Republicans in the Senate. It is possible that Snowe will have a primary challenge from the

Right. There are no declared Democrats at this time.

Michigan -- JAC supported two term Senator Debbie Stabenow when she was a member of the House and in both of her hard fought Senate races. She was first elected in 2000, defeating GOP incumbent Spencer Abraham. Michigan has suffered as much as any state during the economic downturn, and 2010 saw the election of a Republican Governor and a Republican legislature. Stabenow is a top target and this will be a tough race.

Minnesota -- Senator Amy Klobuchar was the first woman elected to the Senate from Minnesota. During her first term, Klobuchar has been a positive vote on JAC'S issues and especially vocal and visible on issues concerning women. Amy took the lead to pass the most significant consumer product safety legislation in a generation, keeping foreign toxic products off our shores and out of our stores. She faces a possible challenge from GOP Rep and Tea Party leader Michele Bachmann.

Missouri -- First term Senator Claire McCaskill defeated incumbent GOP Sen. Jim Talent with barely 50%. Talent has indicated that he might seek

a rematch. Sarah Steelman, former st. Treasurer and '08 Gubernatorial candidate, has already announced her decision to challenge McCaskill. Claire has been another consistent vote on JAC's issues, 100% on Choice and out front on healthcare.

New York -- Kirsten Gillibrand was appointed to fill the Senate seat vacated when Hillary Rodham Clinton became Secretary of State. Gillibrand needed to run in 2010, the next regularly scheduled election mandated by state law. Now, she needs to run again in 2012, for a full six-year term. Two races in two years makes fund raising and campaigning very difficult. As Senator, Gillibrand has been perfect on JAC's issues.

Washington -- Maria Cantwell is running for her 3rd term, having been reelected in 2006 with 57%. Aside from being perfect on JAC's issues, Sen. Cantwell has protected countless jobs in Washington's aerospace industry and has worked to create still more high-paying jobs through effective investments in new technology and job training. She successfully led the fight to stop drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Four Washington GOP House members are considered possible opponents.

Separation of Religion and State

Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN) has announced that she plans to hold classes on the Constitution for new members of Congress - classes to be taught by David Barton, the founder and president of WallBuilders. WallBuilders says that its goal is to "exert a direct and positive influence in government, education and by 1) educating the nation concerning the Godly foundation of our country; 2) providing information to federal, state, and local officials as they develop public policies which reflect values; and 3) encouraging Christians to be involved in the civic area." Barton argues that the United States was "founded to be

a Christian nation" and that separation of church and state is a myth. Barton says he is a historian, but he only holds a degree in Christian education from Oral Roberts University. If David Barton is the person leading the Constitution classes for new members, it is highly likely that these men and women will also consider separation of church and state a myth.

A Texas legislator has introduced a bill that would allow public school teachers to display the Ten Commandments in their classrooms. State Rep. Dan Flynn (R) told the Fort Worth Star Telegram that, "this is necessary to protect teachers who have the desire to

establish that the country's historical background is based on Judeo-Christian traditions...this might be a reassuring step to people that we are wanting to maintain and hold on to those historical findings of how our country was founded." But, in *Stone v. Graham*, the Supreme Court struck down a Kentucky Law that mandated such displays in public schools. It's clear that this is meant to be a test to that decision and whether there is a difference between a mandate and a voluntary operation. Kelly Shackelford, president of the Liberty Institute of Plano, Texas, says Flynn's bill will serve as a challenge to the *Stone* decision.

Israel, continued from page one

An Israeli commission composed of retired Israeli Supreme Court Justice, Jacob Turkel, Northern Ireland Nobel Peace laureate Lord David Treflane and retired Canadian brigadier general Kenneth Watkin released a report on the Flotilla bound for Gaza last summer. (*New York Times*, 1/23/11) The

commission alluded to the regrettable consequences of the loss of human life and injuries, but found that Israeli soldiers had acted "professionally and in a measured manner in the face of extensive and unanticipated violence." This 300 page report dealt with the legality of the blockade and its en-

forcement and will be presented to the United Nations. Defense Minister Ehud Barak issued a statement saying that the conclusions "prove that Israel is a law abiding country that is capable of examining itself and that respects the norms and rules of the international system."