

# JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

January 23, 2012

## On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

I confess I'm a political junkie. The Saturday night before the South Carolina primary I was desperately channel hopping when I happened upon Mike Huckabee's Republican Presidential Forum. Each candidate sat with Huckabee for twelve minutes while undecided voters asked questions. The queue was a long line of men and women, no one of color and few, if any, of a non-Christian faith.

I was concerned as I listened to the questioners attempt to certify the Christian values of each candidate. They pounded the candidates on abortion and the Obama administration's "war against religion," among other topics. And the candidates gave them the red meat that they wanted. Romney promised to appoint judges to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and Santorum vowed to outlaw contraception. From abortion to guns to education to religion — the views the GOP Presidential hopefuls expressed are throw backs to a time pre-civil rights and pre women's rights. As they raced to the right of each other, I feared that my home state would tilt right into the Atlantic Ocean.

Thirty-two years ago, when JAC was founded, leaders of the newly empowered radical right wrapped their political agenda in religious garb. Their goal was to turn back the clock on reproductive choice and separation of religion and state and to pull the rug out from under minorities, women and those who most needed the protections provided by government.

Thirty-two years later not much has changed.

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## Israel

General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived in Israel on January 19, for his first official visit as Chairman. He met with IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz and Defense Minister Ehud Barak in the IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv and later with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres, and more military leaders. Ahead of Dempsey's visit, Barak said that an Israeli military strike against Iran is still "very far off" and that Israel was coordinating with the US on how to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Dempsey assured Gantz and Barak of US commitment to Israel, "The simplest message of all, my presence here, I hope reflects the commitment we have with each other and I'm here to assure you that's the case." (*Jerusalem Post* 1/20/2012)

Israeli and Palestinian envoys met in Amman, Jordan, on January 14, for the third time this month. The sides agreed to meet again on January 25. Last September, the Quartet - the US, EU, Russia and the UN - gave the parties 90 days, starting in October, to work "toward narrowing the gaps between them and present their proposals on core issues like security and borders." The US State Department is trying to encourage "flexibility, creativity, real dialogue... January 26 is not set in stone." The Palestinians see the January date as a deadline, after which they could declare the talks a failure and renew their diplomatic activity at the United Nations. Israel continues to call for direct talks to begin immediately, without preconditions, but the Palestinians only repeat that they will not talk without a settlement freeze and a set framework for negotiations. PA President Mahmoud Abbas told senior members of his Fatah Party, "If we agree on a common ground, then we go to negotiations; but if the ground is not there, then what are we supposed to negotiate about? So far, there is no agreement on the

## United States

### REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In the fifty states combined, according to the Guttmacher institute, legislators introduced more than 1,100 reproductive health and rights related provisions. Sixty-eight percent of these provisions restrict access to abortion services. The new restrictions took many forms: bans, waiting periods, forced ultrasounds, denied insurance coverage, clinic regulations, defunding of family planning services, abstinence only education, and the limiting of telemedicine.

Specifically, the states have been hard at work. Ohio legislators introduced the Ohio "heartbeat bill." This bill, which passed the Ohio house, would ban abortions after the fetal heartbeat is first detected. This would override the fetal viability limit set by the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision. (*HuffPost*, 1/12)

Kansas legislators are pushing for a state constitutional amendment banning all abortions. This bill will resemble the "personhood bills" and the legislature is hoping that staunch abortion opponent, Gov Sam Brownback will back this law. (*Kansas City Star*, 1/18/12)

Texas passed a law, that was upheld by the appeals court, that would require women seeking an abortion to have an ultrasound and to hear a physician's detailed description of the fetus. (*Wall Street Journal*, 1/12/12) Critics correctly point out that this restriction gets the government involved in the relationship between the doctor and patient, is an infringement on free speech, and mandates an unnecessary and intrusive medical procedure.

Starting this month, Arkansas abortion clinics will have new restrictive inspection standards; Utah and Nebraska will bar private health plans from covering abortion.

As we celebrate the 39th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* this month, the ruling that gave women the right to have

(*Israel*, continued on page two)

(*Reproductive Rights*, continued on page two)

# Research & Races

**2012 HOUSE RACES TO WATCH,** The makeup of the current House of Representatives is 192 Democrats, 242 Republicans and 1 vacancy, that will be filled on January 31. Democrats need a net win of 26 seats to regain the majority (218). There are 16 open Democratic seats and 12 open Republican seats. Districts may become open because of redrawn district lines and added districts based on the 2010 census. Redistricting has not been completed in all of the 50 states.

The following states are gaining districts; Arizona (1), Florida (2), Georgia (1), Nevada (1), South Carolina (1), Texas (4), Utah (1), Washington (1). The following states are losing districts: Illinois (1), Iowa (1), Louisiana (1), Massachusetts (1), Michigan (1), Missouri (1), New Jersey (1), New York (2), Ohio (2), Pennsylvania (1). Most of the gain is in the Southwest and South, whereas the losses are primarily in the East and industrial Midwest. The task of redrawing district lines falls to state legislatures, except in the few instances where independent commissions have been appointed.

The following races are currently on JAC's radar screen.

**AZ-01** JAC-supported Dem. Rep. **Ann Kirkpatrick** was defeated in 2010

by GOP Rep. Paul Gosar. Kirkpatrick is trying to regain her seat but this will not be a rematch. Gosar has announced that he will run in the newly redrawn 4th district, where there is no incumbent.

**AZ-02** Dem. Rep. **Gabrielle Giffords'** announced that she will resign effective the week of January 23rd, shortly after the President's State of the Union speech where she will appear. Gov. Janice Brewer (R) has 72 hours to announce a date for a special election mandated to take place about five months after the vacancy. This will be a difficult seat for Dems to hold, but the party is hoping Gifford's husband Mark Kelly will run.

**CA-30** is a merged district forcing JAC friends **Howard Berman** and **Brad Sherman** to face each other in the Democratic primary. As a result, the Jewish community will lose one strong advocate in Congress.

**FL-22** is represented by Tea Party Republican Allen West. The redrawn district will make it harder for him to win reelection. He will face the winner of the Democratic primary between former West Palm Beach Mayor Lois Frankel and businessman Patrick Murphy.

**IL-02** JAC-supported Dem. **Jesse Jackson Jr.** is being challenged by former 11th district Dem. Rep. **Debbie Halvorson**. Although JAC supported Halvorson when she originally ran in the 11th, JAC has been supporting Jackson throughout his 9 terms in the House and will continue in 2012.

**IL-11** Former Dem. Rep. **Bill Foster** is running in this newly drawn district. Both parties have primaries. JAC will support Foster in his primary.

**IA-04** Former Iowa First Lady Christie Vilsack is challenging GOP Rep. Steve King, probably the original Tea Partier. This will be an uphill fight for Vilsack. Vilsack faces an uphill fight.

**MA-04** Dem. Rep. and JAC friend **Barney Frank** is retiring. The Democratic nominee is likely to be Joseph Kennedy III. No other candidates have declared at this time. Massachusetts' filing deadline is August 28. This will likely be a race for JAC.

**MI-14** Dem. Reps. **Gary Peters** and freshman Hansen Clarke have been put in the same redrawn district. JAC has supported Peters in his two runs for the House and will stay with him.

More next month...

## 2012 Election: Voting Rights

On MLK day, US Attorney General Eric Holder pledged to use the full force of the Justice Dept. to defend the Voting Rights Act of the 1960's. (*LA Times* 1/16/12) In anticipation of the 2012 election, conservatives in state legislatures are attempting to put roadblocks in the path of voting rights. These laws would undermine the Voting Rights Act that many fought so hard to enact.

Claiming "states rights," many states are enacting stringent laws including: mandating of government issued photo i.d.'s, restriction of voter registration drives, repealing election day registration, cutting early voting opportunities, limiting polling days and times that directly affect certain voting groups and enacting laws that challenge the citizenship of eligible voters. These laws have been introduced to combat

voter fraud. However, voter fraud is almost a non-existent problem in America and in actuality the laws will keep millions of eligible voters from performing their constitutional right to vote. The Voting Rights Institute believes that the actual purpose of this unprecedented assault on the right to vote is to defeat President Obama in 2012 by keeping minorities, students and the elderly at home.

### Reproductive Rights, continued from page one

an abortion, lawmakers are testing more ways to limit access to abortions

across the states. As we see a surge in social conservatism across the country,

more anti choice activity is inevitable. (*The Economist*, 1/12)

### Israel, continued from page one

ground...January 26 is a crossroad." (*Jerusalem Post* 1/16/2012)

On January 16, a group of Internet hackers known as Nightmare attacked the websites associated with Israel's stock exchange, its two largest banks, and El Al airlines. The hackers demanded that Israel apologize

for "the occupation of Palestinian lands. Israel's foreign minister, Danny Ayalon, responded on his Facebook page, "This morning, various Israeli websites were attacked by hackers... They have demanded an apology for Israel's defensive measures. I am using this platform to send a clear message that we will never apologize

for defending our country and our citizens." According to HaAretz.com, Israel hackers, who go by the name IDF-Team, brought down the websites of both the Saudi Stock Exchange and the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange. ITP.net, which calls itself the Middle East's leading technology site, says the Israeli attacks were unsuccessful.