

# JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

July 2013

## On my mind this month...



Janna Berk

This past month has been a sobering reminder to all of us that *elections matter*. We have been witness to the passage of anti-choice legislation in Texas, Ohio, North Carolina and many more, where bills brought to the floors of state houses and passed by conservative majorities represent the clear next front in the war against abortion. Make no mistake – a crusade has been launched to regulate abortion out of existence, and the votes of our elected officials will determine whether or not it will succeed.

Polls show the majority of Americans favor a woman's right to choose. Surely we didn't agree to what we're getting. Or, did we? A friend of mine recently asked me why I became involved with JAC. Was I a political junkie, or an activist? What was the compelling reason? My answer required no thought: I joined JAC out of a deep desire to give voice to the issues I care about. Period.

I wasn't well-versed in how a bill becomes a law, but I knew how I felt about my government telling me what to do with my own body. I knew what it felt like to talk with friends and hear how they supported a far right-wing candidate because they were "good on Israel." And, I knew the only way to ensure that my point of view was represented was to join a group that could get the right candidates elected. I understood that my membership would fund JAC's mission, that donating to candidates through JAC would amplify our collective positions, and that ultimately, my voice would be expressed through votes cast by these elected officials.

Our values are at stake. I urge all of us to consider the legislation being passed today, and remind ourselves that we joined JAC to stand up for those values.

Make your voice heard this election season. Support JAC.

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## ☆ Israel

Secretary of State John Kerry announced on July 19 that **Israel and the Palestinian Authority had "established a basis" for resuming formal peace talks** and hopes to convene a meeting in Washington within a week or "very soon thereafter." The diplomats to meet in Washington, D.C. are Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, Tzipi Livni, the Israeli Justice Minister in charge of peace talks, and Isaac Molho, an aide to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (*New York Times* 7/19/2013)

Netanyahu said about the peace negotiations, "I view the resumption of the diplomatic process at this time as a vital strategic interest of the State of Israel." (*The Hill* 7/20/2013)

In another important development, the Arab League has given their backing to Kerry's latest proposal. Kerry, on behalf of President Barack Obama, has gone to the region six times in the last five months in order to bring the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. He is expected to announce an outline for the talks, which will be focused on the pre-1967 borders, with land swaps; his goal is "two states for two people" – Palestine for the Palestinians, and Israel as a Jewish state. (*Haaretz* 7/19/2013) One of the Palestinian demands for talks is the release of about 100 long-serving prisoners in Israeli jails. Israeli leadership is very divided on whether to grant this request, as is Israeli society.

In Congress, **HR 938 – The U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act**, has 300 cosponsors and designates Israel as a major strategic partner of the United States. This act will provide for increased cooperation and assistance between the two countries and provide funding for vital weapons systems.

In other news, **Ambassador Michael Oren has announced that he plans on leaving his post this fall.** After more than four years, this American-born academic is being replaced by Miami-born Netanyahu aide, Ron Dermer. Oren has often discussed the relationship between PM Netanyahu and President Obama, and has always dismissed rumors of problems between the two leaders. He says they have an "open, frank, sophisticated and mature relationship."

Oren worked hard on the U.S.-Israel relationship, spoke out on the importance of a nuclear-free Iran, a peaceful two-state solution, and promoting Israel in all international forums. JAC appreciates the friendship with Ambassador Oren and hopes to work together with Mr. Dermer for years to come.

In her confirmation hearing as Ambassador to the United Nations, **Samantha Power vowed to support Israel** and work to get Israel a

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# Reproductive Rights

Although *Roe v. Wade* is the law of the land, state legislatures throughout the nation are acting to restrict a woman's right to obtain an abortion. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that states can regulate abortions as long as the rules do not pose an "undue burden" on a woman's right to choose. According to the Guttmacher Institute, there have been 43 provisions enacted by states this year aimed at denying that right.

A sweeping set of abortion restrictions adopted by Gov. Rick Perry (R-TX) is the latest in a series of state-level political fights that will determine what access women have to abortion. (*Washington Post* 7/17/2013) So far in 2013, states have enacted laws defining "personhood" as beginning at conception, restricting the time for an abortion, or banning it outright.

**Arkansas:** Legislature overrode the governor's veto banning abortions at 12 weeks after a woman's last menstrual

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cycle, mirroring an overturned law in Arizona. The ACLU and the Center for Reproductive Rights are now challenging this law, and in May a judge blocked its enforcement.

**North Dakota:** Gov. Jack Dalrymple (R) signed into law a bill restricting abortions when a fetal heartbeat is detectable, which can be as early as six weeks. He also signed bills prohibiting abortions for genetic abnormalities, banning medication abortion, and requiring abortion doctors to have hospital admitting privileges. Legal challenges have been filed for all of

these laws: The fetal heartbeat law, scheduled to go into effect August 1, has been temporarily blocked by the U.S. District Court as "a blatant violation of the constitutional guarantees afforded to all women."

**Texas:** State Senator Wendy Davis (D) stood for 11 hours as she attempted an all-night filibuster to stop an omnibus anti-abortion bill that included a 20-week abortion ban. Arkansas and North Dakota, among other states, have also enacted laws banning abortion after 20 weeks. Unfortunately, Gov. Rick Perry (R) signed the bill into law on July 18, leading to the forced closing of most abortion facilities in the state.

In June, the **U.S. House of Representatives passed a 20-week abortion ban** that Republican Senators are planning to bring to a vote. Because the Senate has a slight pro-choice majority, and the President supports choice, this legislation will not become law. However, this has caused a precarious situation for reproductive rights.

Other states, while not outright banning abortion, have imposed numerous restrictions on a woman's ability to

obtain an abortion. Many regulations are designed not to benefit patients, but to make it impossible for providers to comply, effectively limiting access.

- **Alabama, Wisconsin, and North Dakota** require providers to have admitting privileges at local hospitals.

- In June, **Ohio** adopted a new law prohibiting public hospitals from accepting transfers from abortion

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facilities if the patient needs emergency care. This will shut down most abortion facilities, as Ohio law also requires abortion providers have an agreement with a hospital to transfer patients in case of emergency.

- **Arkansas and Pennsylvania** have moved to limit coverage of abortions in the health care exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act. In fact, 22 states have restricted abortion coverage available through their state insurance exchanges. North Carolina just passed a similar law that has yet to be signed by the Governor.

- **Kansas** has passed measures requiring providers to endorse specific non-medically-based literature on abortion and have redefined what constitutes a medical emergency for a woman seeking an abortion.

- **Indiana and Oklahoma** now require women seeking abortions to have an ultrasound.

- **North Dakota** extended the time a woman must wait to have an abortion by excluding weekends and holidays from the days counted in its 72-hour waiting period.

- **Virginia's** busiest abortion clinic has closed because its operators could not comply with new regulations requiring it to meet strict hospital-like standards.

- **Wisconsin's** Republican Governor signed an invasive ultrasound bill, claiming it protects women's rights.

- **Alabama, Indiana, and Mississippi** have enacted laws prohibiting the use of telemedicine (doctor-patient communication via computer, an essential medical care tool in rural areas) effectively stopping the use of the abortion pill.

Although legal challenges to these laws have been mounted, many restrictions that are already in effect limit a woman's access to a safe abortion. Abortion may remain legal, but without access, this right is meaningless.

## Separation of Religion & State

The Obama administration refused to relax its rules towards religious nonprofits and corporations that object to the contraception insurance mandate in the new federal health care law, citing the prevalent use and health benefits of using contraceptives. Dozens of for-profit companies have filed lawsuits over the free contraception coverage mandate on religious or moral grounds and many think this issue is headed to the Supreme Court. (*Washington Times* 6/28/2013)

Rhode Island Gov. Lincoln Chaffee (D), citing the separation of church and state, vetoed legislation that would have allowed the issuance of specialty “Choose Life” license plates to raise money for a Christian crisis pregnancy center that opposes abortion. When signaling his opposition to the anti-abortion related plates, Chaffee cited Rhode Island’s long tradition of separation of church and state, which goes back to its founding by Roger Williams as a haven of tolerance. (*Fox News* 7/17/2013)

As states around the country are defunding Planned

Parenthood centers and low income women are being forced to go without medical care, religious-based crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) are being opened and publicly funded. Most CPCs are based on Evangelical Christian teachings, refuse to offer contraception or discuss abortion choices. States, including Ohio, are providing funding from welfare programs to these centers that actively promote childbirth. Kellie Copeland, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio, said that these centers mislead women and give inaccurate medical information. (*Columbus Dispatch* 7/15/2013)

In other news, a San Diego judge ruled that yoga poses like downward dog are not religious, allowing a yoga program to continue in school. Parents sued the school district because they claimed yoga classes indoctrinate children and yoga is inherently religious, claiming a violation of separation of religion and state. Thousands of parents, the school administration, and the judge stated that the poses are not a risk to church-state separation. (*NBC News* 7/1/2013)

## Gun Violence Prevention

The Trayvon Martin tragedy has reopened the gun conversation in America. As people are coming to grips with the death of an unarmed teenager and the not-guilty finding of the Florida jury, there is an alarming escalation of gun sales across the country. Florida granted 173,000 new concealed carry gun permits in the last year alone. Over one million Florida citizens are gun owners in a state where Stand Your Ground is the law. (*New York Times* 7/17/13)

According to a survey in the *Wall Street Journal*, a dozen other states had issued more than half of a million gun permits in 2012. Politicians in another 20 states are being prodded by the gun lobby to loosen their concealed carry laws according the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. In Illinois, conceal carry became law after a 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling. The state legislature overruled a veto by the Governor that would have limited the number of guns or ammunition for anyone with a carry permit. (*New York Times* 7/18/13)


The Government Accountability Office estimates that more than eight million Americans have concealed carry permits. Mississippi allows its citizens to openly carry guns without permits and many states are passing laws to allow guns in

bars, schools and crowded areas.

Groups like JAC, Mayors Against Illegal Guns, The Brady Campaign, The Religious Action Center and many others are working with Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly and Americans for Responsible Solutions, to encourage legislators to pass common sense gun regulations. Gabby and Mark are traveling around the country to ask Senators to try again to pass a background check bill.

Other measures being worked on in both chambers include: appointing a head of the ATF, requiring annual inventory checks by firearms dealers – a Lost and Stolen Gun rider, laws to prohibit people on the terrorist watch list from obtaining guns (which was defeated in the House Appropriations Committee 19-29), and working to lessen the influence of the NRA. (*Salon* 7/18/2013)

Senators and Representatives need our phone calls to their offices to know that each of us stands for common sense gun legislation. These calls let them know their constituents want action.

 **202.224.3121**  
Call your Senator and Representative to demand action.

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“nonpermanent seat” on the UN Security Council. Power said, “The United States has no greater friend in the world than the state of Israel.”

Ambassador Oren, when asked about Power, said, “Samantha Power and I have worked closely over the

last four years on issues vital to Israel’s security. She thoroughly understands those issues and cares deeply about them.” (*Tablet* 7/19/2013)

**Go to [www.jacpac.org](http://www.jacpac.org) for up-to-date news on the peace process as it happens.**

# Research and Races

**Elections Matter:** Holding the Senate in 2014 and providing a firewall against radical politics in the House, with candidates who are pro-Israel, pro-choice, pro-separation of religion and state is vital for JAC and our mission of upholding Jewish values. Many issues are at stake for the Jewish community, i.e. immigration reform, voting rights, marriage equality, common sense gun legislation, reproductive rights, environment and climate change, funding for food assistance, and more. JAC supports these Senators and wants you to know them better. We will continue to highlight important races in the upcoming elections.



**Sen. Al Franken (D-MN)** won his Senate race in 2008 by 312 votes after months of recounts. Since then, he has been a strong advocate for JAC issues and those of concern to the Jewish community. Franken, a longtime supporter of marriage equality and women's reproductive rights, has worked hard on both of those issues in the Senate, even filing an amicus brief with the Supreme Court to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Franken sits on three Committees: Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP); Committee on the Judiciary; and the Committee

on Indian Affairs. As only he could say, "I guess the HELP Committee really isn't a big deal unless you care about little issues like health, education, labor, and pensions." In the Senate, he has been vocal on an assault weapons ban, the importance of immigration legislation, and the need for a voting rights law. Minnesota is an important state in the 2014 election and Senator Franken is a friend that we need to strongly support.



**Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC)** will confront a powerful GOP in her bid to retain her seat in 2014. North Carolina is a pick-up hope for the Republicans; JAC supports Hagan and her strong votes on our core issues. In a state that has recently passed stringent anti-choice legislation, Hagan has declared, "I am a strong supporter of a woman's right to choose." She has cosponsored legislation requiring businesses to add contraception to healthcare plans, as well as other pro-choice bills. Hagan supported the legalization of gay marriage and Obamacare. JAC is especially thankful for her brave vote in favor of expanding background checks on gun purchases, protecting North Carolinians. On her reelection challenges, Hagan stays focused on jobs and the economy, and hopes that Democrats and Republicans can work together to solve the nation's problems.

## How JAC Is Spending the Summer

JAC members, Evie Fisher, Nancie Blatt, Sen. Dick Durbin, Rep. Jan Schakowsky, and Linda Ruder.



At left, JAC member Susan Berk with Rep. and Mrs. Ted Deutch (D-FL).

At right, JAC's Betsy Sheerr with Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) on Martha's Vineyard.



At left, JAC President Janna Berk with Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) at a DSCC event.



**Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA).** As the most endangered red state Democrat, JAC supports our friend Sen. Mary Landrieu. Landrieu promoted her pro-Israel beliefs with actual legislation and cooperation. She recently participated in a Commerce Department trade mission to Israel in order to spur opportunities for business and governments to work together on energy issues. She is also working to build a joint academic collaboration between U.S. and Israeli universities, focusing on energy research and development. In her third term, Landrieu has said about her opponents in the 2014 race, "I do not scare easily." She is a fighter and a strong fundraiser. Landrieu is pro-choice and voted in favor of the Affordable Care Act. This year she voted for the expansion of background checks on gun purchases, which has earned praise from Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly. Landrieu comes from a political family and JAC wholeheartedly supports her for Senate in 2014.

**To support these candidates go to**

**[www.jacpac.org](http://www.jacpac.org)**

**Click the red DONATE button in the upper right corner, then select "Donate to a Candidate."**