

Presidential Outlook



Janna Berk

November is the month in which we recall how much there is to be thankful for. Our rabbis tell us that this year, 2013, Thanksgiving overlaps with the Jewish calendar to create a rare phenomenon called *Thanksgivukkah* – a convergence of the first day of Hanukkah with the Thanksgiving holiday. Evidently this event won't recur again for 80,000 years – a moment to be truly appreciated.

In this spirit, please join me in considering those things for which we are thankful, and should never be taken for granted: (1) An end to the government shutdown – we now know that extremist members of Congress won't hesitate to act on this threat again, and that real people suffer when this is used as a bargaining chip. Lawmakers are already engaging in post-shutdown posturing as they brace for another confrontation on the upcoming budget negotiations. Elections matter – this conduct is unacceptable. (2) Elected officials who stand strong on our issues – refer to the JAC website (jacpac.org) to view those candidates we support and count on to be our voices. We are thankful for their unwavering commitment, particularly in this political climate. (3) The Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare) – despite computer woes and myriad attempts to derail and defund this legislation, enactment of this law has been a monumental step forward. It is providing health care coverage to millions of uninsured Americans and will provide security to millions more. Our friends in Congress remind us that the voices of those who speak out against healthcare and women's reproductive rights are persistent. JAC will continue to join others in mobilizing efforts to protect our rights. (4) Israeli peace negotiations and nuclear weapons negotiations – Secretary of State John Kerry's formal relaunching of peace talks in July gives us reason for cautious optimism. We appreciate the progress these talks may yield, and are keeping a careful watch on any developments.

Happy *Thanksgivukkah* to all, and may this season inspire each of us not just to be thankful, but to give of ourselves to those causes which are furthered only when we move to action. ❁

✪ Israel & the Middle East

Peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, led by Secretary of State John Kerry, resumed in July after a three-year hiatus. Through the negotiators, Tzipi Livni of Israel and Saeb Erekat representing the Palestinians, many issues are being discussed. Although they have promised Secretary Kerry to keep the negotiations and progress from the public, we do know that all issues are on the table, including land, water, refugees and recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. This week, in order to bolster the negotiations, Israel released 26 Palestinian prisoners. All 26 were convicted murderers and many Israelis opposed this move. As Palestinians greeted the released prisoners with parades and celebrations, Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "The decision to release prisoners is one of the toughest decisions that I've taken as prime minister. My Heart is with the bereaved families... This decision is a necessity, given the reality in which we live. (*The Times of Israel* 10/29/13) In

ISRAEL continued on page 2

♀ Reproductive Rights

After a federal judge had struck down key parts of a new Texas abortion law, considered among the most restrictive in the country, an appeals court overturned his ruling, causing the immediate closing of many Texas clinics. Rights advocates have filed an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court of this decision. Opponents claim the law violates the constitutional rights of women and puts unreasonable demands on doctors who perform abortions. U.S. District Judge Lee Yeakel blocked the law's requirement that doctors obtain admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the clinic, arguing that it "places a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion of a nonviable fetus and is thus an undue burden to her."

Yeakel had also blocked a part of the law that deals with medication-induced

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS continued on page 2

⚖ Separation of Religion & State

The Affordable Care Act and contraception are now involved in the church-state war and the constitutionally protected wall of separation. In response to the Affordable Care Act's coverage of contraception, many right-wing religious groups are opposing the mandate as a blow to their religious liberty. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has lobbied Congress saying that publicly subsidized coverage for birth control forces people to violate their consciences. The right wing wants to deny employee access to contraception based on the religious or moral objections of their employers. (*Americans United* 10/16/13)

On November 1, the D.C. District Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the birth control mandate in ObamaCare, concluding the requirement limits the free

SEPARATION continued on page 2

& Beyond the Core

As of November 1, 48 million people who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) saw their benefits decrease. The \$5 billion funding cut will affect families, children, the elderly and veterans in every state in the United States. (*Center on Budget and Policy Priorities* 10/28/13)

Although these cuts will be terrible for the many that rely on SNAP, Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA) is proposing an additional \$39 billion cut that will prove to be

BEYOND THE CORE continued on page 3

Go to www.JACPAC.org for more information on JAC's issues.

ISRAEL continued

a move to appease Israelis opposed to these releases, The Israeli Interior Minister announced the plan for construction of 1,500 additional housing units in East Jerusalem. (*Foreign Policy Magazine* 10/30/13)

Israel's UN Envoy, Ron Prosor, lodged a complaint with the UN Security Council accusing Hamas of continuing to launch attacks against the Israeli people while Israel attempts to obtain a peace deal with the Palestinians. (*The Times of Israel* 10/29/13) Two rockets were fired from the Gaza strip on October 28th and landed in Southern Israel. The Iron Dome Missile Defense System intercepted one rocket and the other landed in an open field, according to the IDF. In retaliation, Israeli planes struck concealed rocket launchers in GAZA.

In Geneva, Iran sat down with the six world powers to discuss its nuclear program. In an *LATimes* editorial, Dennis Ross, Eric Edelman and Michael Makovsky write that the most pressing national security threat facing the United States remains preventing a nuclear capable Iran. They agree that the preferred objective is a diplomatic agreement. They also agree that the success of the talks hinges on Iran understanding that there will be real consequences if negotiations fail. (*LATimes.com* 10/29/13)

Congress and Jewish groups are understandably nervous about these talks and the easing of sanctions. Secretary Kerry says, "A bad deal is worse than no deal." Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama are in constant contact about the negotiations, and according to a White House statement, "will continue their close coordination on a range of security issues." Israel is concerned and distrustful of the Iranian negotiations. As members of Congress are urging a new round of Iran sanctions, the Administration is attempting to delay such sanctions until after the next round of talks. Four major Jewish groups received a National Security briefing about Iran's nuclear weapon program. At the meeting, Administration officials made clear that the U.S. will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon, and although all options are on the table, the preference is to resolve the issue through diplomacy. (*JTA* 10/30/13)

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS continued

abortion but allowed restrictions on the same issue to move forward. Provisions such as requiring strict use under Food and Drug Administration protocol and mandatory follow-up visits remained in place.

A district court last year ruled that Oklahoma's 2011 law restricting medication-induced abortions was "so completely at odds with the standard that governs the practice of medicine" that it was effectively an abortion ban. The state's attorney general put the question to the U.S. Supreme Court. In October, the Supreme Court said the Oklahoma law violates both the state and federal constitutions. (*Washington Post*, 10/29/13). The Supreme Court will not rule on a plea from Oklahoma to revive abortion medication restrictions. (*SCOTUSblog.com* 11/4/13)

The laws that require buffer zones between abortion clinics and protesters are being challenged again, this time at the U.S. Supreme Court. Many experts believe that with the John Roberts and Samuel Alito on the bench, the buffer zones could be ruled unconstitutional. Buffer zone laws were made in response to increased threats and violence used by anti-abortion protesters in the 90s to disrupt clinics. We are watching the Supreme Court in hopes it will preserve the rights of women seeking health care services to be free from intimidation, threats and the potential for physical harm. (*San Jose Mercury News* 10/10/13)

While JAC and others continue fighting for women to retain their reproductive rights, anti-abortion groups are peddling misinformation to frighten women. In an article arguing that no late-term abortions are done to save the mother's life, *LifeNews.com* claims that abortion doctors say there is never a medical reason for late-term abortion. (*LifeNews.com* 10/14/13)

Women have late-term abortions for various reasons. Some women learn of serious physical defects or a life-threatening illness after mid-

SEPARATION continued

exercise of religion. The court ruled that it is unduly burdensome to business owners who oppose birth control, on religious grounds, to be required to cover their employees' contraception. This 2-1 decision ruled in favor of two Catholic brothers who own a 400-person company in Ohio. The judges said they were unconvinced that forcing companies to cover contraception protected a woman's right to decide when and if to have children. (*The Hill* 11/1/13) This case will make its way to the Supreme Court.

Our constitution does not allow one group's religious convictions to have privilege over another's. Cases concerning the conscience clause are continuously being tested in the Congress, even used as amendments to end the recent government shutdown. Hobby Lobby has petitioned the Supreme Court to rule this session on whether the Religious Freedom Act of 1993 allows employers to deny contraception coverage based on their personal religious beliefs. (*The Hill* 10/21/2013)

The Affordable Care Act already exempts churches and houses of worship from the contraception mandate. Members of religiously affiliated institutions are able to obtain free birth control directly from their insurance companies without the institutions having to contract, arrange, pay or refer for contraceptive coverage. The administration has been accommodating to religious views while stressing the importance of family planning services for all American women.

JAC will stay in close contact with our elected officials to keep contraception legal and available for all women.

term genetic testing or ultrasounds. In other cases, giving birth would cause serious harm or death for a mother. Having a late-term abortion is often a heart-wrenching decision to end a wanted pregnancy. JAC continues to fight for reproductive rights for all women.

**JAC Happenings
Around the U.S.**



With Senator Kirsten Gillibrand on the Hill. — pictured left to right is Janna Berk, Betsy Sheerr, Kirsten Gillibrand, Linda Sher, Daniela Fernandez and Dana Gordon.



Above, left to right, Monti Redman, Merle Styker, Lilly Ledbetter, and Barbara Koch, at an event with Ledbetter and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky.



At left, JAC members meet with Kentucky Senate candidate, Alison Lundergan Grimes. Pictured left to right: Linda Sher, Joy Malkus, Grimes, Marcia Balonick, and Andrea Solow.

Action Alert

Call your representative today and urge them to sign on to **HR 1565**, (background checks at gun shows and web sales). If you don't call, they won't vote!

**Call 888-997-3976
or text "myvoice" to
877877.**

BEYOND THE CORE continued

devastating. U.S. Sen. Al Franken joined dozens of U.S. Senate Democrats last month in supporting funding for SNAP, a federal welfare program better known by its common name, "food stamps." Thirty-nine U.S. Senators — 37 Democrats and two left-leaning Independents — signed a letter which was sent to the conference committee members now working on revising the farm bill. Franken said in a statement attached to the letter, "I met with farmers and farm leaders who want us to ensure that we don't hurt children, seniors and families... across the country by slashing SNAP funding in the farm bill. I've seen firsthand how these safety-net benefits are an effective tool to help fight hunger." (*Minnesota Post* 10/28/13) Jewish Federations across the country are mobilizing in their push against more SNAP cuts.

Major Gun groups spent October bringing attention to domestic violence and the need for common sense gun

legislation that will lead to saving the lives of women. Statistics gathered by Mayors Against Illegal Guns show that on average 46 American women are shot to death each month by current or former intimate partners, the presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that the woman will be killed, and more than half of mass shootings involve domestic violence.

According to a recent Gallup poll, personal safety and protection is the top reason Americans own guns today. Yet, thanks to current loopholes in federal law, many domestic abusers are still able to obtain guns. A group of domestic abuse survivors held a press conference on Capitol Hill recently to urge Congress to pass stronger background check measures. (*New York Times, The Gun Report* 10/30/13)

JAC will continue to urge our legislators to pass common sense gun legislation.

Research and Races

Ann Callis is a former chief judge of Illinois's Third Judicial Circuit. She is a candidate to represent Illinois' 13th congressional district in 2014, a seat



Left to Right: Joy Malkus, Ann Callis, Lisa Rubinstein, and Stefanie Rubinstein.

currently held by Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL). She is the only candidate in this race who represents all of JAC's core issues. Callis is a

strong supporter of Israel -- promoting its right to defend itself, pledging support for foreign aid and believing in a two-state solution. As a military mom, she understands the challenges Israeli families face as their sons and daughters begin active military duty. Her strong pro-choice stance respects women's reproductive rights, ranging from access to emergency contracep-

tion to the elimination of unnecessary waiting periods. Join JAC in supporting Ann Callis for Congress.



Andi Minkoff (left), with Ann Kirkpatrick.

Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) represents Arizona's right-leaning 1st District in a race rated as a toss-up. As a member who stresses bipartisanship, she knows how to represent her values while looking for compromise. Although willing to work with members on both sides of the aisle, she does not waver on JAC's issues. Kirkpatrick strongly supports Israel, foreign aid and the historic US-Israel relationship. She believes that abortion is a woman's unrestricted right. We appreciate our relationship with Kirkpatrick and strongly support her bid for reelection.

In the Senate: Rep. Bruce Braley (D-IA), who has represented Iowa since 2007, has an important fight in his bid for the Senate seat held by retiring Senator Tom Harkin. He's the only Democrat in the 2014 race, but a number of Republicans are vying for the GOP nomination, none of whom support abortion rights, common-sense gun regulation, or the Affordable Care Act. Braley is pro-choice, and advocates increasing federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. He promotes family planning education and co-sponsored a bill to ensure access to and funding for contraception. Braley is also a strong supporter of Israel and the U.S.-Israel relationship. JAC has long-supported Braley, and we believe he would be an asset in the Senate. We will be closely watching this race.



Bruce Braley

in. Since entering Congress in 2009, Peters has shown a strong pro-choice record, voting against banning federal health coverage that includes abortion and for allowing the military to perform abortions in cases of rape or incest, as well as signing the Military Access to Reproductive Care and Health for Military Women Act. Peters is also committed to protecting the U.S.-Israel relationship stating, "Steadfast American backing has helped lead to Israeli peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. And American involvement continues to be critical to the effort to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians."



Left to right: Lisa Lis, Donna Crane, Gary Peters, and Lisa Brown.

Also running for Levin's seat is former Michigan Secretary of State, Terri Lynn Land (R), who supports the privatization of Medicare and Social Security, and wants to repeal the Affordable Care Act. She may face a number of other possible contenders from her party, including U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers (R), Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. We feel Peters is the best candidate to replace Levin's seat. JAC fully supports Peters in this election.



Elections Matter
We support a strong U.S./Israel relationship, reproductive choice, and separation of religion and state.

Like us on Facebook /jointactioncommittee
Follow us on Twitter @jointactioncomm
Connect with us on LinkedIn at
Joint Action Committee for Political Affairs



www.JACPAC.org

JAC Newsbreak is a monthly publication of JACPAC.
Writers: Joy Malkus, Dana Gordon, Megan McCann, Miranda Wilgus
President: Janna Berk
Executive Director: Marcia Balonick
(847) 433-5999 Fax: (847) 433-6194
info@jacpac.org ©JAC 2013

Upcoming Events

Talking Points November, Illinois.

JAC welcomes Amy Walter, National Editor of the *Cook Political Report* and Fellow at University of Chicago Institute of Politics, November 5th.

Michigan Membership Meeting.

Details to come.

Want your JAC event listed here? Please e-mail the information to info@JACPAC.org.

For more information, go to www.JACPAC.org.