

JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

January 25, 2013

On my mind this month...



As JAC leadership joined in the swearing-in festivities of the 113th Congress and celebrated with newly elected JAC candidates, the underlying question was “can this new Congress work together on the important issues facing the nation”. The

112th Congress excelled at gridlock and partisanship and let many important pieces of legislation like VAWA expire without passage. The Tea Party faction flirted with allowing the country to go over the fiscal cliff as well as introducing many onerous anti-choice bills.

The 2013 rhetoric already mirrors the partisan divide that defined the last Congress. Lines were drawn on the debt ceiling with both sides stating no more negotiations. The first Sunday of 2013, senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell, said on the morning shows that nothing else will happen until March except fiscal debates.

JAC does not accept this. We plan to urge members of Congress to address the other problems facing our country. Recent examples of violence against women should propel the Congress to pass VAWA. The Congress should address the country’s fiscal health without destroying the safety net for the less fortunate. Congress must act on guns. JAC will advocate for gun violence prevention and gun safety legislation. The murder of 20 first graders touched our nation and we cannot allow our attention to wander and our passion to lessen. We have to fight for safety in schools, movie theaters, malls and on the streets. When we go to DC, please change your schedules to come with us. And, when we dedicate new resources to this fight, please support us generously.

Make 2013 a year of peace. ♦

Reproductive Rights

The good news is that...

according to The Pew Research Center, 63% of Americans said *Roe v. Wade* should not be completely overturned, compared with 29% who said it should. These opinions have changed little since 1992. The abortion issue shows only modest generational differences and no gender gap. The most likely to favor upholding *Roe v. Wade*, at 69%, are baby boomers, followed by 18-29 year olds at 68%. (Washington Post 1/17/13)

The bad news is that the House of Representatives and state legislatures around the country feel differently. Vice Presidential candidate, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), co-sponsored the Sanctity of Human Life Act, a bill that gives full legal rights to human zygotes from the moment
(continued on page two)

☆ Israel

Election Results

Israel’s Central Election Committee released the final results of the 2013 general election in the early hours of January 23. The joint *Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu* ticket, headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, secured 31 Knesset seats, a significant drop from the 42 seats the two parties currently hold and a much smaller victory than predicted. The virtually new party, *Yesh Atid* (There is a Future) won 19 seats, becoming the second largest party in the Knesset. Netanyahu gave a victory speech shortly after midnight, “I’m proud to be your prime minister. I thank you for giving me a chance, for the third time, to lead the State of Israel. It is a great privilege and a great responsibility.”

Yesh Atid, founded only nine months ago, is lead by Yair Lapid, a well-known TV personality in Israel. Lapid was born in Tel Aviv in 1963, the son of Tommy Lapid, another famous journalist turned politician. Ten years ago, Tommy Lapid led the secular, liberal *Shinui* party when it became the third largest party and joined Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s coalition. Speaking late Tuesday night, Lapid said,

“The State of Israel faces complex challenges...An economic crisis that threatens to shatter the Israeli middle class, a world that might outcast us because of the frozen peace process and the fear of social disintegration caused by the burden equality debate (code words for the ultra-orthodox not serving in the military)...There’s only one way to face these challenges: together!”

The Labor Party secured the third largest number of seats (15), but Labor Party chair Shelly Yacimovich announced, “She will fight with all her might for the formation of a government headed by someone other than Netanyahu.”

Voter turnout in Israel was the highest since 1999, 66.6% of Israelis and 80% of IDF soldiers. Voter turnout in the Arab sector dropped significantly. There will be major turnover in the 120 members Knesset; approximately 50 seats will be occupied by new MKs. All of the above, especially the drop in seats held by Likud, is expected to make it tough for Netanyahu to form a coalition. The prime minister vowed to form as broad a coalition as possible, saying he considers *Yesh Atid* a “true partner” in government.

“The new government will be based on five principles: The first is security. We will meet the security threats Israel faces, first and

foremost is stopping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon; The second is fiscal responsibility; the third is political responsibility – we will strive to achieve true peace; the fourth is ensuring the equal distribution of burden in society; and the fifth is cutting the cost of living and housing prices.” ♦

Action Alert

February 4, 2013 Interfaith Call-in

JAC joins in coalition with other organizations to flood the Capitol with calls and emails. Ensure the voice of faithful Americans rings throughout the halls of Congress.

Demand action to prevent further gun violence!

March 19, 2013

Advocate on the Hill with JAC
Fly-in, drive-in, walk-in...but please come to DC with us for a day of advocacy on the Hill. Let us know you are interested and we will keep you updated as details develop.

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Gun Violence Prevention

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Washington, DC

President Obama, alongside Vice President Joe Biden, released to the American people a package of recommendations to reduce gun violence. Largely, this package involves keeping guns out of the wrong hands, increasing school safety, and expanding access to mental health care.

Gun politics has been a controversial debate for the last several decades, but the recent shootings – Tucson, Oak Creek, Virginia Tech, Aurora, and Newtown – have sparked not only a heavy conversation, but also an immediate call for action. Although a majority of Americans desire stricter gun control based on recent polling, there is major opposition among the influential National Rifle Association (NRA) and Republicans. Some even believe that President Obama's goal is to take away everyone's guns, despite his continuous support for the second amendment. The battle has shifted from a fight between responsible gun owners and the government, to the rights of innocent victims of violence and the mass earnings of weapons manufacturers. In spite of this resistance, President Obama proclaimed, "if there is even one thing we can do to reduce this violence, if there's even one life that can be saved, we've got an obligation to try." The 23 individual executive actions were prepared by Vice President Biden incorporating the concerns and opinions of citizens, elected leaders, victims' advocates, and myriad organizations.

The President's plan includes:

- Closing background check loopholes to keep guns out of dangerous hands
- Banning military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and taking other common-sense steps to reduce gun violence
- Ending the freeze on gun violence research
- Preserving the rights of health care providers to protect their patients and communities from gun violence
- Making schools safer by putting up to 1,000 more school resource officers and counselors in schools and help schools invest in safety
- Ensuring every school has a comprehensive emergency management plan
- Creating a safer climate at schools across the country
- Improving mental health services by making sure students and young adults get treatment for mental health issues
- Ensuring coverage of mental health treatment
- The nomination of a new director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms and Explosives (ATF): Todd Jones

Because these proposals do not signify specific legislation, the White House will be vigorously working with members of Congress to produce bills to implement as many of the recommendations listed above as possible. It is now in the hands of the American people to come together, utilize our voices and our rights, and demand a safer country. ♦

Reproductive Rights

of fertilization. This bill would give all legal and constitutional attributes to an embryo before it implants in the uterus. Legal experts have pointed out that this bill could outlaw some forms of birth control and in vitro fertilization, and would criminalize abortion in all states. As of this date, the bill has 17 co-sponsors. (Huff Post Politics 1/16/13).

Reps Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and Diane Black (R-TN) separately reintroduced bills during the first days of the 2013 legislative session that would prohibit Title X family planning grants from being awarded to any organization that performs abortions – actually targeting Planned Parenthood. These bills have over 38 co-sponsors. (Think Progress 1/10/13) The Hyde Amendment already bans the use of federal monies to fund abortions but these Congresswomen still demand the defunding of Title X recipients. Interestingly, 64% of voters said that this promise to defund abortion providing organizations was a decisive factor in November's election. (TP 1/10/13)

On the state level, Texas, Virginia and Wyoming are leading the way against reproductive rights. Governor Perry (R-TX) has declared war on family planning clinics. Unless the courts intervene, Texas is no longer eligible to receive the \$200 million plus a year that Medicaid provided to Texas to care for low-income women. A GOP controlled committee in the Virginia State Senate voted 8-7 to block Democrats' efforts to repeal a new mandatory ultrasound law and a set of regulations that could shut down many abortion clinics in the state. The Medical Society of Virginia and the Virginia American College of Obstetricians testified in favor of repealing the ultrasound bill, but their testimony was ignored. Two bills in Wyoming fixate on the heartbeat of the embryo or fetus before an abortion. These bills would force a woman to listen to the heartbeat of the fetus, If a heartbeat is detected, the abortion would be prohibited. Wyoming legislators claim they are just giving women opportunities to make educated decisions. (Wyoming Trib.com 1/14/3)

JAC will continue to fight these battles and others as they arise. Our elected leaders must be reminded of the need for safe and legal avenues for women and their reproductive rights. ♦

Research & Races

2013 Senate

Two new U. S. senators have been sworn in since the November elections.

- Brian Schatz (D-HI) was appointed by Governor Neil Abercrombie to fill the seat vacated by the death of Senator Daniel Inouye on December 17. Schatz will serve until 2014 when Hawaiians will vote in a special election for the remainder of Inouye's term, which expires in 2017. Schatz is 40 years of age, Jewish, and was the Lieutenant Governor. He is now the youngest U.S. senator. Prior to his election as Lieutenant Governor in 2010, Schatz served four terms in the Hawaii House of Representatives. JAC staff met Senator Schatz at a reception in DC in early January, and he assured us that we "would be happy with his positions on our issues."

- Tim Scott (R-SC) became the first African American senator from the South on January 3. He was appointed by South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley following Sen. Jim DeMint's resignation to become the head of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington. Senator Scott is 47 years old; he served two years in the South Carolina House of Representatives and was elected to the U.S. House in 2010. According to South Carolina's senior Senator, Lindsey Graham, Scott "is a strong fiscal, social and national security conservative."

- When Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) is confirmed as the new Secretary of State, Massachusetts' Democratic Governor Deval Patrick will appoint someone to fill that vacancy until a special election can be scheduled. Democratic Rep. Edward Markey is planning to run in the special. He may, or may not, have a primary opponent. Recently defeated GOP Sen. Scott Brown is the likely Republican nominee.

2013 House

There are currently three vacancies in the House that will be filled by special elections: *Illinois 02* held by Dem. Jesse Jackson, Jr., *Missouri 08* held by GOP Rep. Jo Ann Emerson, and *South Carolina 01*, the seat vacated by now GOP Sen. Tim Scott. ♦