

Presidential Outlook



Janna Berk

Although I am preaching to the choir, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that elections matter - all elections. Whether it is a primary election or a general, a presidential election year or a midterm, a special-election or run-off, elections are won or lost based on how many of us show up and cast our vote. It is widely accepted that higher voter turnout favors Democrats, and whether or not you believe this, the Republican party appears to; hence efforts across this country to suppress votes have focused on restrictions to early voting, voter ID laws, voter purges, etc. The 2012 election cycle saw the greatest rollback on voting rights since the post-Reconstruction era, and for this reason as well as others, only 58.2% of the eligible voting electorate participated in the presidential election.

While I could go on to discuss other issues that determine the outcomes of elections (certainly the gerrymandering of districts leaves only a handful of states whose votes significantly impact the elections), I choose instead to focus on our individual responsibility to vote, to engage in the fight for others to vote, and to push to educate others about the importance of participating in all elections. Primaries matter. The Tea Party has worked hard to change the dynamics of primary campaigns, and they have been successful at bringing far right-wing candidates into the general election line-up. The recent special election in Florida's 13th District, where Democrat Alex Sink was defeated by Republican David Jolly, is a swing district in a swing state. When voters don't vote, other influences, such as outside money, fill the void.

We have been given the right to vote in this country, and exercising that right is essential to securing a strong US-Israel relationship, a woman's right to choose, and separation of religion and state. Remind your friends about the importance of voting, and make sure nothing keeps you from going to the polls this year. ❁

ELECTIONS MATTER

☆ Israel & the Middle East

As Israelis prepare for the festival of Purim, Gaza militants are busy with modern day attacks. This past week over 70 missiles from the Gaza strip struck various locations, including southern Israel. The Iron Dome system intercepted three rockets as residents were told to stay in protected areas. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attacks. ([Ha'aretz 3/12/2014](#)) The IDF quickly retaliated against the largest attack on Israel since 2012.

On March 9th, an Iranian ship carrying advanced rockets from Iran to Gaza was intercepted by the Israeli army. Major General Aviv Kockavi, head of military intelligence, said the rockets were capable of striking anywhere in Israel. ([AFP 3/7/2014](#)) Rockets and missiles are not the only tools being used by anti-Israel activists. The BDS movement routinely opposes a two state solution and seeks to delegitimize Israel through boycotts

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♀ Reproductive Rights

This month's Newsbreak will devote the reproductive choice column to an interview conducted on March 7th with Donna Crane, the Vice President for Policy at NARAL Pro-Choice America. JAC regularly partners with experts from many organizations in order to provide the best information for our readers. Ms. Crane is a frequent speaker for our organization and is on the front lines to protect women's reproductive rights.

In our far-reaching conversation, we discussed Roe v. Wade, state restrictions, the Supreme Court, elections, the most dangerous states for choice, and concerns for the future. The pro-choice community knows that reproductive rights are necessary for all women: poor and wealthy, single and married, rural and urban. As for the state of Roe v Wade, the fear is that although the American public is

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS continued on page 2

⚖ Separation of Religion & State

The religious right is back and fighting against the separation of religion and state. Oral arguments for the case. *Sebelius v Hobby Lobby*, begin March 25th. As a defense, Hobby Lobby's owners are invoking their personal right to freedom of religion, arguing the Constitution permits them to enforce their religious beliefs on their employees. The issue is whether secular, privately-held corporations can claim religious exemption from federal laws, specifically the Affordable Care Act. ([CNN](#)) The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that laws which result in unintentionally limiting religious practice do not, in fact, violate the Constitution. The Affordable Care Act allows for religious institutions to opt out of providing contraception coverage to their employees, and offers alternative access to those employees. In this case, the owners of Hobby Lobby contend that they should qualify for a

SEPARATION continued on page 2

& Beyond the Core

According to the Gun Violence Archive, 3,185 people have been injured by gun violence in America and 1,937 have been killed since Jan. 1, 2014. ([New York Times 3/10/2014](#)) There have been 10 school shootings in 2014. What is the answer? It depends on where you sit on this issue. If you are Wayne LePierre, Executive President of the NRA, then you believe, "There is no greater freedom than to survive and protect our families with all the rifles, shotguns, and handguns we want." If you are Senator Rand Paul, then you think guns should be allowed

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

ISRAEL *continued*

of academic institutions, food and services made or developed in Israel, and pressuring entertainers and artists to not perform there. ([JTA 3/11/2014](#))

The United States Congress and President Obama are working across party lines to support Israel. President Obama included increased spending on missile defense for Israel in his 2015 budget. Legislation has passed 410-1 in the House declaring Israel to be a major strategic partner of the US and expands US-Israel cooperation in areas including defense, intelligence, energy, agriculture, and science and trade. Letters reinforcing Congressional determination to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons are circulating in both houses.

Secretary of State Kerry recently stated about the Iranian nuclear negotiations, “We will not permit Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon. The United States will only sign an agreement that answers three critical questions the right way. First, will it make certain that Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon? Second, can it continuously assure the world that Iran’s program remains entirely peaceful as it claims? And third, will the agreement increase our visibility on the nuclear program and expand the breakout time so that if they were to try to go for a bomb, we know we will have time to act?” In that same speech Kerry reiterated his commitment to Israel and the peace process. Kerry has been to the region 10 times since becoming Secretary of State and is working on an agreement between the Palestinians and Israel to finally bring peace and a two state solution.

At the AIPAC conference, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu emphasized his distrust of Iran, demanding more pressure be applied to abandon their nuclear weapons program. He also spoke strongly in favor of the peace process and urged the Jewish community to be supportive of a final peace deal. President Obama has repeatedly stated that Israel should be recognized as a Jewish State. Unfortunately PA President Abbas has again rejected Israel’s request that the peace agreement include recognition of Israel as a Jewish state saying, “There is ‘no way’ we will agree to recognition.” ([Jerusalem Post 3/7/2014](#))

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS *continued*

more Pro-Choice than ever, the laws being passed across the country will make the Supreme Court’s historic decision all but obsolete. In states across the country, barriers to access are increasing. In Texas, the shutdown of clinics has led 7% of women needing abortion care to actually try to self-abort. There is a growing fear that increased restrictions, forced ultrasounds, demeaning scripts forced on doctors to read to women, fewer clinics and laws making it impossible for doctors to practice medicine – not to mention the ongoing threat of violence and harassment from anti-abortion protestors – will lead to more clinics closing and more women taking matters into their own hands.

The anti-Choice community has been working relentlessly for 30 years to overturn *Roe v Wade*. They have started at local levels, electing and appointing anti-Choice lawmakers to all offices, from state legislatures all the way to the Robert’s Supreme Court. In acknowledging the political strength of those who oppose reproductive rights, the Pro-Choice community must be attentive. Elections matter. In Virginia, Choice was one of the major issues in the recent gubernatorial race when anti-Choice candidate Ken Cuccinelli lost the race to Terry McAuliffe. Cuccinelli’s views were too restrictive for even this conservative state. Reproductive rights will be an issue in many 2014 races and will have long-lasting impact on the state and national scene. The Senate hangs in the balance and many pieces of anti-Choice legislation will get votes if the Senate changes hands.

Many restrictions are insulting, demoralizing, and intrusive – and in some states downright dangerous. Currently, the worst states for reproductive freedom are Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, South Dakota, and Arizona. Elections Matter - we encourage everyone to learn about what is happening in their own state, to pay attention to elections at all levels, and to vote on issues relating to women’s reproductive rights.

SEPARATION *continued*

religious exemption, even though their company focus is retail. Under ACA, the company owners would not be forced to use contraception themselves, just offer it to their employees through the company health insurance plan. Instead, they are arguing for an exemption that would legally allow them to impose their religious beliefs on their workforce. JAC will be watching this decision as the repercussions will resonate throughout many of our most important issues.

As we watch the news, many right wing commentators boost their ratings by creating a so-called “War on Christianity.” Night after night, they bemoan the government and secular intrusion into their religious lives. In response, 31 state legislatures have introduced Religious Freedom Protection acts. In Arizona, the Republican-led legislature passed a bill that would have allowed business

owners to assert their own religious beliefs by refusing service suspected members of the LGBT community. Arizona Governor Jan Brewer (R) vetoed SB 1062 after an outcry from the LGBT community, human rights groups, national Democrats and Republicans, major corporations and the National Football League. Similar religious legislation has been introduced in states such as Ohio, Kansas, Mississippi, Idaho, South Dakota, Tennessee and Oklahoma. ([Yahoo News 3/7/14](#))



Source: American Religious Freedom, The Ethics and Public Policy Center

Religious Freedom Laws by State

ELECTIONS MATTER Research and Races

The debate for reproductive rights continues to heat up as control of the House and Senate are up for grabs. Far right and tea party candidates continue to push an agenda that strives to hurt women and families. Read below to see some of the other outlandish comments GOP candidates have said. While Conservative groups are flooding these races with money, JAC will work even harder to raise critical funds to support our friends. JAC will keep you updated on the primary results.

Rep. Gary Peters (D-MI) is running to fill the seat of retiring U.S. Senator



Lisa Lis, Donna Crane, Rep. Gary Peters, Lisa Brown

Carl Levin, a longtime JAC friend. His opponent, former Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land has refused to condemn

Michigan's "rape insurance" law, which bans most insurance companies from providing abortion coverage unless a separate rider is purchased. Land is anti-choice in all circumstances. JAC strongly endorses Rep. Gary Peters and his pro-Israel, pro-Choice record.

Michelle Nunn is the JAC endorsed candidate in the open Georgia Senate race. A pro-Choice Democratic candidate, Michelle Nunn is the daughter of former Senator Sam Nunn and has made community service and volunteerism important in her life. The



Michelle Nunn with Lois Franks

Republican primary field is filled with extreme anti-choice candidates.

She may face Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA), who has promised to make abortion illegal at

"any stage" and with "no exceptions." Broun recently raffled off an assault weapon — his second one — at his campaign office. Rep Jack Kingston (R-GA), another possible strongly

anti-choice opponent, believes low-income kids receiving federally subsidized lunches should mop the cafeteria floor to pay for lunch. Georgia is an important race for JAC and the Choice community. **The Georgia primary is May 20.**

U.S. Senator Mark Begich (D-AK) has become the favorite target of far right groups. Each of his possible GOP opponents supports extreme views. Tea Party candidate Joe Miller even



Marcia Balonick, Dana Gordon, Senator Mark Begich (D-AK), Linda Rae Sher, Joy Malkus

favors keeping discrimination legal saying, "private employers have the right to do

what you want with respect to your business," including discrimination. Republican candidate Lt. Governor Mead Treadwell has compared the anti-choice movement to the fight to end slavery. Begich has earned a 100 percent approval rating from NARAL. **The Alaska primary is August 19.**

Allison Lundergan Grimes (D-KY) is running to unseat Kentucky Senator and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. McConnell is one of the staunchest anti-choice members of the Senate with a 0% rating from NARAL. McConnell recently strolled onto stage at the Conservative Political Action Conference's convention brandishing



Allison Lundergan Grimes with Betsy Sheerr

a gun over his head. Grimes, endorsed by the pro-Choice Emily's list, favors expanding background checks for gun purchasers. McConnell faces a primary challenge from a tea party candidate who is pulling McConnell even

further to the right. McConnell has been in the Senate since 1984. Grimes would be an asset to the issues JAC supports. **The primary is May 20.**

NEWSbreak

BEYOND THE CORE continued

in post offices. In support for this proposed amendment, The National Association for Gun Rights claims that gun-free zones are really criminal safe zones. In Kentucky and New York, church pastors think it is a blessing to raffle off AR-15 assault weapons to church goers. GOP Senate candidate, Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA) thinks it is a great idea to raffle off assault weapon in his campaign to face Michelle Nunn. He defends these raffles saying, "as one of the most conservative members of Congress, and a staunch supporter of the 2nd amendment, it is no secret that the Democrats and liberal media would love to take away our guns..." The Idaho state legislature just passed measures to allow guns on college campuses. Over the objection of university presidents, trustees, faculty and many students, Gov. Otter (R-ID) thinks 2nd Amendment rights should not end where the campus borders begin. Lastly, a Florida Senate panel approved SB 968 allowing school employees to carry concealed weapons.

Studies show that having a gun in the house does not make a woman safer. Women with firearm access become homicide victims at significantly higher rates than men. In a study in the *Journal of Trauma*, the authors concluded that "more than twice as many women are killed with a gun used by their husbands or intimate acquaintances than are murdered by strangers." To date, not a single study has shown that the risk of *any* crime is decreased through female gun ownership. ([The Atlantic 2/23/2014](#))

In a big win for gun violence prevention last week, Facebook announced that the company, including Instagram, will work to reduce firearm sales through their platforms. Over 230,000 supporters signed a petition from Moms Demand Action, resulting in Facebook's new policy. ([Think Progress 3/5/2014](#))

JAC promotes common sense gun legislation and will continue to fight laws, raffles and policies that put more dangerous weapons on our streets.

NEWSbreak

JAC Happenings

Around the U.S.

ELECTIONS MATTER



JAC Presidents Janna Berk, Gail Yamner, and Betsy Sheer with Rep. Patrick Murphy at JAC event in Palm Beach, FL.



JAC Member Lisa Lis with Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)



JAC event in Palm Beach with Rep. Patrick Murphy (FL-18)

Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) at a JAC event in Boca Raton with Barbara Koch, Merle Styer, and Art Seiden



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

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Joint Action Committee for Political Affairs



www.JACPAC.org

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UPCOMING PRIMARIES

May 6th
Indiana
North Carolina
Ohio

May 13th
Nebraska
West Virginia

May 20th
Arkansas
Georgia
Idaho
Kentucky
Oregon
Pennsylvania

Action Alert

Call your Senator today and urge them to vote yes on the US-Israel Strategic Partnership.

Call 202.224.3121

Upcoming Events

Talking Points New York, March 27th

JAC welcomes Israeli Ambassador Danny Ayalon to discuss the "Truth About Israel."

Michigan Membership Meeting, May 4th

Details to come.

4th Annual Power of Women Luncheon, June 3rd

Lincolnwood, IL
Speaker: Capricia Marshall
Honoree: Former JAC PAC President Lois Zoller

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

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