

### Presidential Outlook



Janna Berk

For 30 years, JAC's overriding commitment has been to a strong and bipartisan U.S.-Israel relationship. This relationship is crucial for the long term survival of Israel and the safety and security of Jews all around the world. Many circumstances arise that create debate within our community. However, in the last few years, the divisiveness over policies is putting those in our community at odds with each other.

I can assure you that while we are allowed to have differences of opinion, we must keep in mind that now is not the time to lose sight of the bigger picture. We stand at this moment in history faced with two pressing challenges: the security of Israel, and the rise of global anti-semitism. One of the fundamental assets we had working for use has been the bipartisan support for Israel in both the House and the Senate, and keeping it this way is the work that JAC engages in every day. The strategic partnership between our two countries is too important to let anyone or any group put it at risk. Together we need to continue the work of protecting this relationship.

As we continue to participate in healthy debate, I urge all of you not to lose faith. Remain engaged, stay informed, and let us be your resource as we sort through this difficult time. ✿



ELECTIONS MATTER

### ☆ Israel & the Middle East

JAC is committed to a strong, bipartisan U.S.-Israel relationship. Ensuring that this bond remains unbreakable has been a prime objective of our American Jewish community.

A recent poll found that Americans continue to have a positive view of Israel. Fifty-one percent of Americans call Israel an ally of the United States, up ten points from 2011. Another 28 percent describe Israel as friendly. (*CBSNews, 3/3/2015*)

Regardless, acts of anti-Semitism are on the rise. The year began with terrorist attacks against Jews and the freedom of speech in France and Denmark. As the Jewish community around the world mourned the deaths of Jews in magazine offices, supermarkets, and synagogues because of their religion, our leaders spoke out.

*ISRAEL continued on page 2*

### ♀ Reproductive Rights

Elections have consequences and at JAC we knew that this Congress would be harmful to women's reproductive health. So far, the conservatives have kept their election promise to focus on anti-choice legislation. Seven anti-choice bills have been introduced: two in the House and five in the Senate in the first three months of 2015. The 20-week abortion ban would have banned all abortions after 20 weeks, even in cases of fetal anomalies. It was scrapped at the last minute because some Republican House members said it was actually too extreme for their constituents. HR7 was introduced in its place and passed easily. NARAL describes HR7 as a bill that would eliminate insurance coverage for abortion for millions of women and would tax small businesses who include abortion coverage in their employee health plans. Other bills introduced would force women to have an ultrasound before an abortion (HR492), eliminate birth control coverage

*REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS continued on page 3*

### ⚖ Separation of Religion & State

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," is a phrase that has welcomed Jews to the U.S. since its founding. Yet many are trying to pass laws allowing Christianity into our schools, public squares, and even our government. Recently a PPP poll found that 57% of Republicans "support establishing Christianity as the national religion." (*Maddowblog 2/28/2015*)

The Supreme Court heard arguments in a religious freedom case regarding Ambecrombie & Fitch's dress code. At issue is whether the dress code prevented a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf from being considered for a job. Title VII of the EEOC requires employers to "reasonably accommodate" an applicant's religious practice, unless such accommodation would present "undue hardship."

*SEPARATION continued on page 4*

### & Beyond the Core

Lawmakers are calling on Congress to pass what they call commonsense gun safety measures. Rep. **Elizabeth Esty** (D-CT) and Sen. **Robert Menendez** (D-NJ) have introduced "The Large Capacity Ammunition Feeding Device Act" (HR752/S207). The first gun safety bill of 2015 would ban large capacity magazine clips for everyone except military and law enforcement officials. Eight states, including Connecticut and the District of Columbia, ban high-capacity clips. Pro-gun legislators have resisted efforts for a federal ban, as well as any new federal gun restrictions. (*Hartford Courant 2/5/2015*)

*BEYOND THE CORE continued on page 4*

Go to [www.JACPAC.org](http://www.JACPAC.org) for more information on JAC's issues.

“The world is witnessing an alarming rise in acts of anti-Semitism, and we must do all that we can to respond to this growing threat,” said Eric Goldstein, CEO of the UJA-Federation of New York. “History has shown us the ramifications of silence.” (*Times of Israel* 3/4/2015)

In response to the escalating attacks against Jewish communities, the Senate passed a bipartisan resolution (S.Res 87) condemning anti-Semitism in Europe and urging measures to prevent and combat anti-Semitic attacks and incidents. It urges the U.S. to work closely with the European Union, governments and international organizations to address anti-Semitism with specific recommendations to enhance their response.

While alert to the dangers of anti-Semitism around the world, there is an alarming increase of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic acts on college campuses here in the U.S. The ‘boycott, divestment, and sanctions’ movement (BDS) has strengthened nationwide as groups have become better organized and well-funded. Anti-semitic students on campuses, including UCLA, Emory, Michigan, Northwestern, and NYU, have built apartheid walls, posted eviction notices on Jewish students’ doors, painted swastikas on Jewish fraternities, and voted to divest from American companies doing business with Israel. These misguided actions are dangerous to our students and future leaders - those who will lead U.S. schools, corporations, and serve in Congress. Many Jewish groups, including JAC, AIPAC, ADL, JStreet, Hillel, and local federations are working together to best help students defend against the BDS movement and feel safe on their campuses.

A recently signed funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) included \$13 million for security at religious and other nonprofit institutions. In the wake of increased anti-Semitic attacks, this money provides security to Jewish schools, synagogues and other nonprofits. (*Forward* 3/4/2015)

Secretary of State John Kerry has been tirelessly working with the P5+1 to negotiate a deal to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The deadline for an agreement has moved to March 24th; the Senate has bipartisan legislation ready in case the framework negotiations fail, including expanding sanctions. Legislators have introduced at least four bills that would ensure Congress has final say over any deal with Iran. The interim agreement with Iran expires on June 30, so the administration could request Congress hold off on legislation, depending on the status of the negotiations on March 24.

Against established protocol, PM Netanyahu was invited to speak to Congress by Republican Speaker John Boehner (R-OH). The White House and many Democrats were upset over the perceived partisanship behind the scenes between Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer and Boehner, as well as the close proximity of the speech to Israeli elections, scheduled for March 17. President Obama called it “a mistake” that ultimately would not be “permanently destructive” to the U.S.-Israel relationship, continuing “I think it is a distraction from what should be our focus. And our focus should be. ‘How do we stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon?’” He went on to note that negotiators are working to ensure “there’s at least a year between us seeing [Iran] try to get a nuclear weapon and them actually being able to obtain one.” (*ABCNews* 2/21/2015)

In his address, Netanyahu began by thanking President Obama for his steadfast support of Israel. “Some of what the President has done for Israel might never be known, because it touches on some of the most sensitive and strategic issues that arise between an American president and an Israeli prime minister. But I know it, and I will always be grateful to President Obama for that support,” he said. He went on to warn of what he called the “countdown to a potential nuclear nightmare.” Netanyahu sought to use the fear that Iran would cheat on any deal, and ultimately escape constraints on its nuclear program altogether, to galvanize U.S. lawmakers from both parties to oppose President Obama’s position, adding, “this deal has two major concessions: one, leaving Iran with a vast nuclear program and two, lifting the restrictions on that program in about a decade. That’s why this deal is so bad. It doesn’t block Iran’s path to the bomb; it paves Iran’s path to the bomb.” (*New York Times* 3/3/2015)

National Security Advisor Susan Rice addressed the concerns of Prime Minister Netanyahu and others at the AIPAC Policy Conference, stating “American leadership rallied the world to toughen sanctions against Iran. Through diplomacy and sustained economic pressure, we’ve halted the progress of Iran’s nuclear program and rolled it back in key aspects. Now, we must give diplomacy a change to finish the job.” Quoting President Obama, Rice said, “But this is not simply a challenge for Israel; it is a danger for the entire world, including the United States. I want to be very clear: a bad deal is worse than no deal. And, if that is the choice, there will be no deal.” (*whitehouse.gov* 3/2/2015)

On March 9th, 47 Senate Republicans sent an open letter to Iranian leaders warning that even if Iran and the U.S. reached an agreement, it could be subject to revocation by Congress or a future President. (*VOX* 3/10/2015)

JAC believes it is the responsibility of the Jewish community to protect Jews in the U.S., around the world and in Israel. The best friend to Israel is a Congress and administration that, regardless of party, promotes a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

**REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS** *continued*

(HR596), repeal funding for Planned Parenthood (SB291), demand unnecessary admitting privileges at local hospitals for abortion providers (S78) and would allow health care providers to deny abortion care, even in a life-threatening emergency (S50). House Republicans even attached language to a major education bill that would financially penalize school districts that allow school-based health centers to provide information about abortion to pregnant high school students. (*Huffington Post* 2/26/2015)

State legislatures have been busy as well. The number of new anti-abortion measures introduced around the country for 2015 has already reached 100. (*Jezebel* 2/2015) A sample of the bills introduced include those that would outlaw the most common second-trimester termination method, require parental notification and the permission of the father, require patients to watch an anti-choice video before they undergo the procedure, require that providers have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals and mandate that patients wait 72 hours before they are able to terminate. (*Huffington Post* 2/2015)

This year, the Guttmacher Institute deemed more than half the states in the U.S. to be “hostile” to abortion care: 24 prohibit ACA (Affordable Care Act) health insurance plans from covering abortion, most only with extreme exceptions like cases of rape or incest. Eighty-seven percent of U.S. counties have no abortion provider. (*RH Reality Check* 1/2015)

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg recently stated in an interview that abortion restrictions enacted in states are making abortion “inaccessible to poor women,” which she called a “crying shame.” She went on to explain “all of the restrictions, they operate against the woman who doesn’t have the freedom to move, to go where she is able to get safely what she wants.” She says these restrictions have an outsize affect on low income women. (*MSNBC* 2/20/2015)

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President Obama, on the 42nd anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* said the landmark decision “protects a woman’s freedom to make her own choices about her body and her health and reaffirms a fundamental American value: that government should not intrude in our most private and personal family matters.” We have a President who supports women’s reproductive rights, but these endless regulations being introduced around the country are actually aimed at taking away these rights.

**Pro-Choice Progress**

Our pro-choice members have been busy as well. Aside from consistently voting against anti-abortion bills, they have also introduced legislation to protect women’s reproductive health. **Rep. Jackie Speier** (D-CA) and **Sen. Jeanne Shaheen** (D-NH) introduced legislation (HR742 and S358) that would require the military health plan, TRICARE, to cover contraceptive services and counseling without copayments. Recent studies have found unplanned pregnancy rates are about 50% higher among female service members as compared with the general population. (*The Hill*, 2/2/2015)

Sen. **Kirsten Gillibrand** has reintroduced her bipartisan “Campus Accountability and Safety Act.” It would require colleges to take annual, anonymous surveys about sexual violence on campus, and would force the federal government to increase disclosure of investigations into colleges accused of mishandling sexual violence on campus. Colleges would have to appoint confidential advisors to assist survivors of sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. (*syracuse.com* 3/2/2015)

**Pro-Choice Legislation introduced:**

- Campus Accountability & Safety Act
- Women’s Health Protection Act
- 21st Century Women’s Health Act
- Access to Contraception for Women Servicemembers & Dependents Act

Sen. **Richard Blumenthal** (D-CT) is leading an effort to reintroduce legislation aimed at blocking state and local laws that prohibit access to abortions or the operation of an abortion clinic. Originally introduced in 2013, Sen. Blumenthal is once again bringing the “Women’s Health Protection Act” to the Senate after it failed to pass during the last legislative session. “Abortion is one of the safest legal procedures in the United States today,” Blumenthal said. (*WAMC Northeast Public Radio* 1/21/2015)

Senators **Patty Murray** (D-WA), **Barbara Mikulski** (D-MD), and **Barbara Boxer** (D-CA) have introduced the “21st Century Women’s Health Act” which would ensure all women have access to maternity care, family planning services, and rape crisis tools.

JAC will continue to advocate for women, families, and our reproductive rights.

## SEPARATION *continued*

The question before the Court is whether an employer has a duty to accommodate religious practice when they *assume* such accommodation is necessary - A&F assumed, but was not told, the headscarf was religious in nature.

Some parents are claiming their beliefs trump the health policy of the U.S. and should exempt their children from vaccine requirements. Arguing against this dangerous practice, Melinda Gates is urging parents to take advantage of healthcare resources in the United States and to get their children vaccinated. She explained, "Women in the developing world know the power of [vaccines]. They will walk 10 kilometers in the heat with their children and line up to get a vaccine because they have seen death." Americans have simply "forgotten what measles death looks like." (*Mother Jones 1/23/2015*) This issue has become a 2016 campaign issue with governors Christie and Walker siding with anti-vaxxers.

Gov. Scott Walker's (R-WI) comment that he didn't know if he believed in evolution prompted another possible 2016 contender to discuss their religious beliefs. During a recent appearance on a Christian TV program, Mike Huckabee explained that he was mulling a 2016 campaign because America had lost sight of its identity as a, "God-centered nation that understands that our laws do not come from man, they come from God." Such a statement shows a strong misunderstanding of the U.S. Constitution. It is not a set of tablets hauled down from a mountaintop by a bearded prophet. (*New York Times 2/14/2015*)

In a disturbing development, laws are being enacted that would protect people who discriminate against the LGBT community on religious grounds. "We have seen this over and over - bills that say they are about protecting one thing when the real goal is to target and discriminate against LGBT people, with vast implications for everyone else," Lambda Legal declared. These so-called "religious freedom" bills would set religious beliefs above gay rights in all situations. Alabama, Arkansas, and Indiana are among the states passing these laws. (*Washington Post 2/25/2015*)

We must be vigilant to maintain the separation of religion and state, as the Bill of Rights demands.

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*

## BEYOND THE CORE *continued*

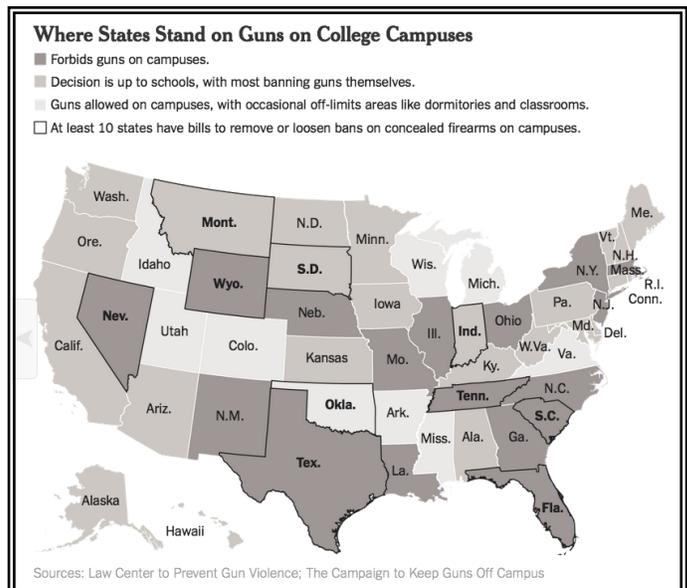
NRA-backed members of Congress wasted no time introducing their own bill to make it easier for people to carry concealed guns across state lines. The "Concealed Gun Reciprocity Act of 2015" would supersede state laws and allow anyone with a concealed carry permit to carry their gun across state lines, no matter how lax or ineffective the issuing state's permitting standards. "Federally imposed concealed carry laws interfere with states' fundamental rights to determine who is too dangerous to carry hidden, loaded guns in public," said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety. (*The Hill 2/12/2015*)

Concealed carry is allowed in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, but to varying degrees. Most states require gun owners to apply for a permit. In 19 states and Washington, DC, federally mandated reciprocity would enable domestic abusers currently prohibited from possessing guns to carry concealed weapons in public by effectively eliminating the law for abusers who hold out-of-state permits. JAC is working with gun safety groups across the nation to help stop this dangerous bill from passing.

The Obama administration and local police departments urged the ATF to ban the sale and manufacture of armor piercing bullets, which are generally used for hunting or target practice. In response, Republican lawmakers introduced legislation to defund the ATF. (*The Hill 3/5/2015*) Recently, the ATF buckled to NRA pressure and will not pursue the ban at this time. (*CNN 3/9/2015*)

An increasing number of states want to allow guns on college campuses, a push that will only lead to more gun violence. In Nevada, one legislator sees this as a way to combat campus sexual assault, saying "If these young, hot little girls on campus have a firearm, I wonder how many men will want to assault them. [Sexual] assaults that are occurring would go down once these sexual predators get a bullet to the head." However experts in sexual assault argue that college students were typically assaulted by someone they knew, sometimes a friend; even if they have access to a gun, they would rarely be tempted to use it. (*New York Times 2/18/2015*)

Meanwhile, the NRA is looking for new opportunities to pass permissive gun laws and to revoke gun safety laws across the country. Many local municipalities, frustrated with the lack of progress on the federal or state levels, have passed their own gun safety laws. For example, many towns in Pennsylvania adopted ordinances requiring gun owners to report lost or stolen guns. The NRA was able to get the PA legislature to pass a bill allowing gun groups to sue the towns and then recover their legal costs from the same towns. Towns across the state, fearful of costly lawsuits, are now trying to reverse commonsense gun laws they worked so hard to pass.



**Research and Races**

This edition we highlight some new members of the House and Senate that support all of JAC’s issues. In their short time in Congress, they have already taken important votes that impact our community.

**Rep. Gwen Graham (D-FL)**



Gwen Graham was one of only two Democrats to defeat a Republican incumbent during this election cycle. She is an attorney and the daughter of former Senator Bob Graham (D-FL). She is a veteran political campaigner, having worked on the campaigns of her father, and the presidential campaigns of Howard Dean and John Kerry. JACPAC supported Gwen in her tough race against a Tea Party extremist, former-Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL). She supports women’s reproductive rights saying, “this is a decision that government has no place in. It should be a personal decision between a woman, her family, God, and her doctor.” We look forward to working with Rep. Graham on JAC’s issues.

**Rep. Mark Takai (D-HI)**



Mark Takai won the seat held by Rep. Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI) by defeating former Rep. Charles Dijiou (R-HI). A proponent of reproductive rights, Takai believes it is the government’s job to ensure women have access to important, potentially life-saving medical services. Takai has served in the Hawaii legislature for the past 20 years. He serves in the Hawaii Army National Guard as a Lieutenant Colonel and took part in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2009. His first trip to Israel several years ago left him deeply moved. “You can’t understand a place like Israel, especially Jerusalem, unless you have been there,” he said. “Israel has every right to defend itself.”

**Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA)**



Seth Moulton is a decorated war veteran, having received the Naval and Marine Corps Commendation Medal and the Bronze Star for bravery on the battlefield. After graduating from Harvard University, Moulton enlisted in the Marine Corps, serving four tours in Iraq. He is staunchly pro-choice, stating that he “believes fundamentally in a woman’s right to make her own health care decisions [and does not] believe the government should come between a woman and her doctor.” Moulton supports funding for the Iron Dome Missile Defense System, and believes Israel has the right to defend itself against terror attacks. He also supports universal background checks and other common sense gun regulations. JACPAC looks forward to working with him and is confident he will be a strong voice for our issues in Congress.

**JAC in Washington, DC**



*Clockwise from upper left: Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-IL), Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA), Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI), Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT).*

## JAC Happenings Around the U.S.



JAC was honored to be present for Ambassador David Saperstein's Swearing-In in Washington, DC. (l to r: Linda Rae Sher, Ambassador Saperstein, Marcia Balonick, Carole Boron)



Talking Points Highland Park welcomed Rep. Robin Kelly (D-IL) in February to discuss the 114th Congress and progress on gun violence prevention, reproductive rights, the US-Israel relationship and more.

Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) joined us in Los Angeles for Coffee & Conversation in February. (l to r: Rep. Ted Deutch, AnnDee Levy)



Gidi Grinstein of the Reut Institute and Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-FL) joined JAC members in Palm Beach for a high-level discussion in Israel. (l to r: Janna Berk, Gidi Grinstein, Lisa Lickstein, Rep. Murphy, Sandy Baklor, and Arlene Kaufman)



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

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Rep. Ted Deutch joined JAC members in Philadelphia for Coffee & Conversation on the issues in February. (l to r: Jill Zipin, Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Shira Goodman)



Talking Points Palm Beach welcomed guest speaker Mona Reis, President of Presidential Women's Health, a women's clinic in Southern Florida. (l to r: Barbara Koch, Joyce Fentin, Janna Berk, Merle Styer, Mona Reis, Carole Feldman, Karyn Lutz, Jane Kornblutt)

For more information, go to [www.JACPAC.org](http://www.JACPAC.org).