

Director's Outlook



Marcia Balonick

I have been involved in politics my entire adult life. There have been many times that I have been distressed by the tone and rhetoric of campaigns. I have been worried about previous elections and their impact on the issues I care about.

Never have I experienced what is going on today. The language concerning immigrants and religious groups is hateful and dangerous. The words being used are not dog-whistles, but rather blatant discrimination. Women have been shamed for normal reproductive health needs.

Candidates are invoking God in their campaigns, disregarding our history as a secular nation. Commentators are quoting an angry electorate, allowing the candidates to excuse their fringe positions and fiery rhetoric.

But we don't have to accept this. We can elevate the conversation and elect candidates who respect others, even those who disagree with them. We can demand that different groups are treated with the respect that we all deserve.

This election will be critical for the future of the issues we stand for. We must remember that the next president will likely pick at least two, and possibly three, Supreme Court Justices.

I urge you to stay involved. Discuss the issues with your friends and family. Let them know that you will vote on the issues that you care about — the issues JAC has fought for over the last 30 years. And please continue to support JAC so we can be a voice of reason in these scary times. ❁

ELECTIONS MATTER

✧ Israel & the Middle East

It looks like the 20 months of negotiations over the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) has paid off on the diplomatic front. A prominent Iranian analyst with ties to the country's senior leadership said that the recent incident involving the seizure of U.S. sailors by Iranian forces was resolved quickly because of Iran's relations with the West. These new-found ties evolved since the signing of the nuclear accord this year. (*Washington Post* 1/13/16)

Iran is continuing to follow through on its part of the JCPOA. According to the State Department, Iran has taken significant steps toward fulfilling its commitments by shipping out over 25,000 pounds of low-enriched uranium materials to Russia (U.S. Department of State 12/28/15). "As we move ever closer to the implementation of the JCPOA, we will remain vigilant to ensure that its implementation achieves

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♀ Reproductive Rights

2016 has arrived, and women's reproductive rights are front and center in the states, Congress and the Supreme Court. Contraception, viability, access and endless regulations will all be debated. Defunding Planned Parenthood was once again at the top of the agenda. The President has already kept his promise to protect women by vetoing a bill to defund Planned Parenthood sent to him by both houses of Congress.

The Guttmacher Institute, a leading reproductive rights research group, did an end of year summary on legislation across the country introduced in 2015. They found that the year ended with 396 anti-choice bills introduced in 46 states and 57 new abortion restrictions in 17 states. In the last five years, states enacted nearly as many new abortion restrictions as they had in the previous 15 years. These

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS continued on page 2

⚖ Separation of Religion & State

Supreme Court Justice Anthony Scalia recently gave a speech where he denied the nation's secular history by stating that the Constitution does not demand the government be neutral on religion. Scalia opined that God has a special interest in the destiny of the U.S. because we honor God and invoke his name. (*Salon* 1/5/2016) The First Amendment is straightforward on the issue of religion, saying "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump recently called for prohibiting all Muslims from traveling to the U.S. His previous calls for surveillance on mosques and establishing databases for all Muslims living in the U.S. was slammed by the Administration and many Jewish groups around the country. In a statement, the

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& Beyond the Core

President Obama announced the executive actions his administration will take on gun violence at a press conference on January 5. Through resolve and tears, standing before Gabby Giffords and the parents of the Newtown victims, he signaled that gun violence will be a top priority of his administration in the new year. He said he gets too many letters "to sit around and do nothing." But anything the President does by executive action is likely to be undone if a Republican moves into the White House in 2017. (*USA Today* 1/4/16)

BEYOND THE CORE continued on page 3

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

exactly what we set out to do from the very beginning of these negotiations, to ensure that Iran's nuclear program is and always remains exclusively for peaceful purposes," said Secretary of State John Kerry.

The U.S. and its allies are concerned about Iran's recent ballistic missile tests. A bipartisan call from lawmakers who supported the JCPOA urges new sanctions on Iran. President Obama and his advisors are looking into the possibility of new sanctions. (*Washington Post* 1/7/16) JAC will be following this issue closely in the coming weeks. Iran's activities pose a continued threat to the region.

Unfortunately, terrorism has returned to Israel. There has been a recent wave of knife attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians. The attacks are random and do not seem to be organized by a specific terrorist group. There have been more than 100 stabbings reported by the IDF. Palestinians and Israeli Arabs have reportedly carried out at least 37 shootings and 22 car rammings since Sept. 14 — leaving almost two-dozen Israelis dead. (*Foreign Policy* 1/5/16)

As a sign of strengthening ties with its Arab neighbors, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu welcomed Egypt's new ambassador to Israel after a three-year absence. (*i24news.com* 1/2/16) Israel's Foreign Ministry announced that it would be closing five of its diplomatic offices across the world. The Ministry said the money saved would go to existing consulates and embassies. (*JTA* 1/6/16)

Hillel serves an important function to Jewish students on college campuses across the country. According to Hillel's international guidelines, the organization will not "partner with, house, or host organizations, groups, or speakers who seek to deny the right of Israel to exist nor support boycott, divestment or sanctions against the Israel." Open Hillel, an organization that promotes BDS, is seeking to be included in Hillel. This is a dangerous development that could have far-reaching consequences for our Jewish college students. Hillel President Eric Fingerhut said, "Hillel will not ... give a platform to groups or individuals to attack the Jewish people, Jewish values or the Jewish state's right to exist." (*The Forward* 1/8/16)

Anti-Semitism in Europe continues to escalate. There was a nearly 62 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents reported in London during the 12-month period ending in November, according to London Metropolitan Police. With rising anti-Semitism, European governments will need to understand the patterns of this violence and to encourage citizens to report incidents. (*Jerusalem Post* 1/5/16) Meanwhile, almost 10,000 Jews from Western Europe, mostly from France, immigrated to Israel last year - the highest number ever. (*Haaretz* 1/14/16)

JAC has always worked to ensure strong bi-partisan support for the U.S.-Israel relationship. As we head into the 2016 election season, it is critical to elect candidates that are committed to this goal.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS continued

restrictions include: medical abortions, private insurance coverage, minors' access, clinic regulations and many more. The attacks severely damaged family planning programs and life-saving fetal tissue research. (*RH Reality Check* 1/4/16)

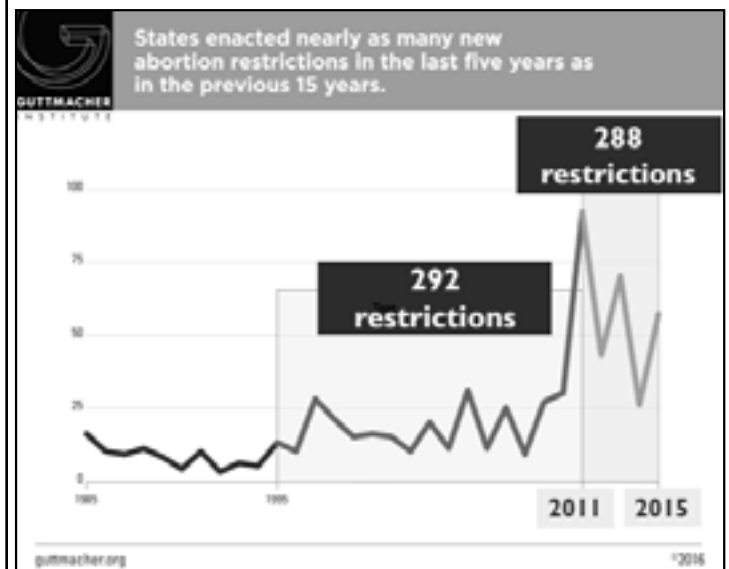
Without yet knowing how many anti-abortion laws will be considered this year, we already know 2016 will be significant in the ongoing battle for reproductive rights. The Supreme Court is preparing to rule on a Texas abortion access case with potentially broad implications for millions of Americans, as well as an important case regarding birth control access for employees of religious non-profits. (*Rolling Stone* 1/2016)

Whole Woman's Health v. Cole considers the constitutionality of a Texas law requiring all abortion clinics to meet the same standards as ambulatory surgical centers and forces all abortion physicians to have admitting privileges at local hospitals. Pro-choice advocates say these unnecessary and burdensome restrictions would close almost all of the clinics in Texas. *Zubi v. Burwell* considers whether the Obama Administration's plan to accommodate religious objections to the contraceptive mandate is a violation of religious liberty. (*reason.com* 1/4/16)

Some states did pass pro-choice legislation including Oregon and California, which were the first states to allow birth control to be sold without a doctor's prescription. Another bill allows women to get a full year's supply at once. However, in Oregon, pharmacists could still deny this access on religious grounds. (*Buzzfeed* 1/4/16) Colorado and Washington are currently considering this legislation. Reps. **Tammy Duckworth** (IL-8), **Patrick Murphy** (FL-18) and **Joe Crowley** (NY-14) introduced legislation to ensure that contraception is covered by insurance, whether prescribed by a doctor or pharmacist.

On the Presidential stage, all three Democratic candidates are strongly pro-choice, and Hillary Clinton is calling for the repeal of the Hyde Amendment. All of the Republican candidates are anti-choice, with Senators Cruz and Rubio promising to appoint Supreme Court Justices that will overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Elections matter.



288 anti-abortion restrictions enacted in 2015

ELECTIONS MATTER

SEPARATION *continued*

Administration called these proposals as contrary to our values as Americans and pointed to the Bill of Rights' protection of freedom of religion. (CNN 12/8/15) The main Jewish denominations as well as numerous Jewish organizations, including the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, the American Jewish Committee and JACPAC, have rejected Trump's call. (JTA 12/15/15)

Religious views are also affecting women's reproductive rights. Social conservatives are rallying around protections for religious liberty as ways of undermining both reproductive health and LGBT rights. They are now arguing before the Supreme Court that any employer's assertion of religious liberty must supersede an employee's right to contraceptive coverage under the Affordable Care Act. (Gutmacher 1/6/16)

While the pro-choice community is celebrating the recent law in Oregon permitting pharmacists to prescribe birth control, there is a caveat. Pharmacists in Oregon, and around the country, have the right to personally refuse to prescribe or fill prescriptions based on religious grounds. (fusion.net 1/4/15) These so-called conscience clauses could affect women who do not have a choice of pharmacies in their area, especially those in rural communities.

JAC will continue to be vigilant on the issue of separation of religion and state and will support candidates who will protect this important constitutional right.

NEWSbreak

BEYOND THE CORE *continued*

The President said the measures would not "solve every violent crime in this country" or "prevent every mass shooting." But, he said, they would "potentially save lives in this country and spare families the pain and the extraordinary loss they have suffered as a consequence of a firearm being in the hands of the wrong people." (The Hill 1/4/16)

With 30,000 gun deaths a year, the President along with many advocacy groups and a group of Senators and Representatives have been trying, since Newtown, to pass common sense gun legislation. The most contentious of Obama's executive actions is likely to be his effort to subject more gun sales to federal background checks than are currently covered by them. (Politico 1/4/16) Other actions include requiring federally licensed firearms dealers to report lost or stolen guns. (Washington Post 1/4/16) Pro-gun groups have fought back against any and all restrictions, even pushing to defeat a bill that would prevent those on the terrorist watch list from legally purchasing guns. In 2015, Congress blocked funding for the Center for Disease Control to study gun safety and voted down legislation that would enable pediatricians to discuss gun safety with their patients.

Despite all the talk about terrorism, in 2015 more Americans were killed by toddlers (52) than by Islamic terrorists (44). (cleveland.com 1/3/16)

Some say that gun laws don't work. Yet, on Christmas Day, 27 people were killed by guns in the U.S. – a number equal to the total number of people killed in gun homicides in one year in Austria, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Estonia, Bermuda, Hong Kong and Iceland – combined. (Washington Post 12/28/15)

Guns will be a large issue in the 2016 election - with the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates on opposite sides of the gun debate. Donald Trump has promised to undo any executive actions the President enacts - including closing the gun show loophole - while encouraging Americans to carry guns to protect against the "bad guys."

Numerous studies show that guns in the home lead to more deaths and accidental shootings. As the recent conflict with armed men taking over a federal building in Oregon shows, there are many different definitions of a good guy with a gun.



JAC was honored to attend the 2015 White House Hannukkah Party



JAC members with White House Jewish Liaison Matt Nosanchuk



JAC members with Reps. Susan Davis (CA-53), Lois Frankel (FL-22), and Nita Lowey (NY-17)



Research & Races



Russ Feingold (D-WI) Former-Senator Russ Feingold is seeking to return to the Senate from Wisconsin. He previously served three terms in Senate and was member of the Foreign Relation Committee, where he gained a deep understanding of the Mideast. He has always been committed to the U.S.-Israel relationship. He is running against an extremely conservative, anti-choice candidate. This is an important seat to win in our efforts to protect women's reproductive freedom. JAC has always been able to count on Feingold. He will be an important champion for all of our issues.



Rep. **Patrick Murphy (FL-18)** JAC is proud to support Rep. Murphy's bid for the U.S. Senate because of his work in Congress on issues of vital interest to the Jewish Community. He believes that Israel is the greatest ally of the U.S. in the Middle East, and is critically important to the safety and stability of the region. He has earned a 100 percent rating from NARAL Pro-Choice America and he can be counted on to fight the extremist attempts to ban and limit women's reproductive choices. This race offers us a wonderful opportunity to tip the balance in the Senate toward reproductive choice.



Senate candidate **Ted Strickland** is a former governor and Representative from Ohio. Strickland was a strong advocate for JAC's issues in Congress and we are confident we can count on him to do the same in the Senate. He supports President Obama's executive order on preventing gun violence with extended background checks. He called the GOP's attempt to defund Planned Parenthood "shameful." His opponent has extreme views on women's reproductive rights. Strickland will also work to strengthen bi-partisan support for Israel.



After serving in the House since 2002, Rep. **Chris Van Hollen (MD-8)** has decided to run for the open Senate seat of retiring Senator **Barbara Mikulski**. Van Hollen is the Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee, and recognized by the Washington Post as a 'bona fide budget expert.' As a graduate of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and Georgetown Law School, he is respected for his intellectual firepower. He is perfect on all of JAC's issues. He recently led the debate on the House floor against a bill that would defund women's health programs.



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

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JAC Around Town

Recent JAC events around the country



Talking Points Highland Park with Rep. Jared Polis (CO-2) & host Faye Morgenstern



Detroit Membership Meeting with Senators Debbie Stabenow & Gary Peters (D-MI), host Roz Blanck and Lisa Lis



Talking Points Los Angeles with Donna Crane. l to r: Host Susan Kurtzman and Dana Gordon



Talking Points Highland Park with Rabbis Wendi Geffen and Debra Newman Kamin discussing the issues through a Jewish lens.



Cocktails & Conversation with Charlie Cook and Rep. Patrick Murphy (FL-18) in West Palm Beach hosted by Betsy Sheerr

Want to host an event?
Call the JAC office at 847.433.5999

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