

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

February 20, 2008

On my mind this month...



Hon. Amy N. Dean

I pride myself in being an informed citizen, but apparently I am not. In the past two months, I have picked up the Miami Herald (hardly a font

of information) and discovered that children in my state have not been allowed to use the “E” word – EVOLUTION. Incredible.

My kids went to private school and I know they were taught about evolution, I even thought the actual word was used, but apparently not. Yesterday, the Florida Board of Education voted to allow the use of the phrase “theory of evolution” in our public schools (private will follow). The fight was over allowing teachers to discuss intelligent design under the guise of what was called the “academic freedom” amendment. Some argued that to prohibit this “freedom” was to allow the “standards that call evolution the fundamental concept underlying all biology” to pass unchallenged. These are code words for let’s teach the Bible in school.

Florida is not alone on these separation issues. Illinois had a prayer amendment passed last year after it was quietly placed in an unrelated bill.

We must always be vigilant. The Middle Ages can still overtake us. We must always support those who fight the effort to impose one religious belief over another. Notably, one of the Florida Board members voiced concern that they would be lynched for allowing evolution to be mentioned. We must let those who support our Constitution know that they are not alone and that we stand with them.

Such is the JAC mission.

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Israel

Four members of the House, Reps. Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Scott Garrett (R-NJ), and Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) have introduced H.Res. 951 “condemning the continuing Palestinian rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli civilians and supporting Israel’s efforts to defend its citizens.” The ongoing rocket attacks total more than 4,000 since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. The resolution recognizes “the difficult balance Israel faces as the competing pressures of being the primary supplier of numerous necessities for Palestinian civilians, such as fuel, electricity, and medicine, even while rockets are being fired at Israel from Palestinian areas.” It also “calls on all nations, including Egypt, to take affirmative, transparent, verifiable steps to stop the flow of rockets and other terrorism-enabling materials (including human resources) to the Palestinian territories.” There are currently 121 sponsors. (*JTA; AIPAC Alert 2/12/08*)

The Israeli Cabinet continues to discuss military options to end the firing of missiles from the Gaza Strip. Reports from the Cabinet meeting held on February 10 said that Prime Minister Olmert has instructed the army to continue preparations for a large scale operation in Gaza, but has put the green light on hold. “The policy of killing senior terrorist leaders will also be stepped up, but within limits.” Olmert and Defense Minister Ehud Barak agree on these decisions. (*The Media Line, 2/11/08*)

The assassination of Hezbollah’s international operations chief, Imad Mughniyeh, was welcome news in Washington, Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv, and according to Middle East scholars and analysts, in Beirut and Bagdad as well. Mughniyeh was implicated in some of the most spectacular terrorist attacks of the 1980s and 1990s, earning him a place on the FBI and EU’s most wanted lists. Syria provided a safe haven for Mughniyeh and

United States

CHOICE

The Washington state affiliate of NARAL Pro-Choice America announced on February 13 that 10% of the state’s pharmacies don’t carry or dispense the emergency contraceptive drug Plan B. The question of whether pharmacists have the legal right, on personal moral or religious grounds, to refuse to dispense the drug, is now under argument in court. Some pharmacists have sued in federal court challenging a state regulation that requires pharmacies to provide Plan B upon request. Plan B can prevent pregnancy if taken within 72 hours of sexual intercourse. The drug is a higher-dose version of standard birth control pills. “This is not an abortion pill,” said Trudi Inslee, wife of Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA), and a board member of the NARAL Pro-Choice Washington Foundation. Inslee encouraged people to ask their pharmacist if they do provide Plan B to a woman upon request, without a prescription, as required by law. “Let them know you’re aware of this and you’re watching,” she said. (*Seattle Post Intelligencer 2/14/08*)

South Carolina GOP state Rep. Greg Delleney has introduced the Right to Life Act, a bill that asserts life begins at fertilization. State Attorney General Henry McMaster says that if the bill becomes law, it would not affect abortion rights protected at the federal level. But supporters say the bill is a step in the right direction should the U.S. Supreme Court overturn *Roe v. Wade*. “I would like to see South Carolina be the reason *Roe v. Wade* folds,” said Johnny Gardner, director of the anti-abortion group The Voice of the Unborn. The Right to Life bill has come before the South Carolina House subcommittee four times. Last year, it made it out of the House but died in the Senate. Opponents say this bill is the latest attempt to chisel away at abortion rights in the state. (*The State.com 2/15/08*)

Research & Races

There are now 29 open House seats currently held by Republicans and 4 open seats held by Democrats. Six vacancies exist in the House, all of which will be filled within the next two months. JAC is in two of the races. In **CA-12 Jackie Speier (D)** hopes to fill the seat of recently deceased Dem. Rep. Tom Lantos. She is favored to win. Democrat **Bill Foster** is running in **IL-14** for the seat vacated by GOP Rep. Dennis Hastert who resigned at the end of 2007. Foster won the special primary on February 5 and will face Jim Oberweis on March 8. These two candidates also won the regular primary and will face off again on November 4. At that time, one of them will have the advantage of incumbency. Foster is a scientist and a businessman making his first run for elective office. He designed the software equipment that helped JAC-supported Rep. Patrick Murphy

(D-PA) win his seat in 2006. Oberweis is an ultraconservative millionaire businessman who has twice run unsuccessfully for Governor and Senate. Demographically, the district favors Oberweis, but this is a year that could defy the trends.

More GOP seats may become open during the next few months. The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) is having trouble recruiting top tier candidates to fill these slots. It can be deflating to be in the minority, especially if you've been a committee chair; to be a freshman minority member is even less appealing. Many state primaries won't occur until later this year so the nominees have yet to be selected. Only Illinois and Maryland have had congressional primaries so far. Ohio and Texas are scheduled for March 4. As mentioned last month, JAC is in the race with

Dem. **John Adler** running for the open seat in **NJ-3**. Adler does not have primary opposition. And, JAC is in with Dem. **Debbie Halvorson** in the open seat in **IL-11**. She will face New Lenox GOP mayor Tim Baldermann in November. Other possibilities are both the 1st and 3rd district seats in New Mexico, open because their current representatives are running for the Senate. There are multiple candidates on both sides of these races and JAC stays out of contested primaries, except when the PAC has already supported one of the candidates. Minnesota's 3rd district could be an opportunity, as could Arizona's 1st and 3rd, New Jersey's 7th, Ohio's 15th, and even Wyoming's at large seat.

If you live in one of these districts or states, you can aid our research by keeping us informed of the local buzz on candidates.

Separation of Religion and State

President George W. Bush has nominated Richard H. Honaker to the US District Court for the District of Wyoming. Mr. Honaker has stated his belief that public policy decisions should be based on Christian doctrine as he interprets it. He believes that the Constitution creates a "Christian America" and in one speech, he said, "I came to know that if the Bible is true, if Christianity is true, then it is true in...all facets of human endeavor. I know that with only such a world view can Christians have any impact upon the culture around them." Honaker has also devoted much of his career to anti-choice activities. As a member of

the Wyoming House of Representatives, he tried and failed three times to pass a state law banning abortion. He also served as counsel to the Unseen Hands of Prayer Circle, a political action committee formed to put the "Human Life Protection Act" on the ballot as a statewide initiative. This nomination is being considered by the Senate Judiciary Committee. **Please let your Senators know that you oppose Richard Honaker's nomination to the federal bench. 202 224-3121.**

At the end of 2007, Rep. Randy Forbes (R-VA), introduced H.Res. 888, a nonbinding resolution creat-

ing an "American Religious History Week." The resolution makes dubious claims about America's religious history. It asserts that the Supreme Court affirmed that the U.S. is a "Christian Nation," based on an 1892 quote by a justice who later clarified his words and rejected the notion that the nation's laws are based only in Christianity. The resolution also claims that because the Constitution is signed "in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven," that is evidence that the founders added a "religious punctuation mark" to the document. In truth, that was standard language at the time.

Israel, *continued*

his assassination on Syrian territory highlights a weakness of the Assad regime in that it can no longer provide real security for the terrorists it harbors. Israel has denied carrying out the assassination, but at the funeral, Hezbollah's leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, threatened to retaliate against Israel saying, "Let it be an open war anywhere." Hezbollah has chosen not to respond with volleys of rockets aimed at the Galilee. Retaliation could occur anywhere. "As Hezbollah draws no fine distinctions between the United States and Israel, both nations, along with Jews around the world, might well have to pay the price for the loss of the man whose mystical aura was as

important as his operation prowess." (*NYTimes*, 2/18/08)

Actions taken by President Bush on February 14 expanded sanctions against Syria. The Syrian Accountability Act, passed in 2003, banned travel from Syria to the United States, banned all exports to Syria except food and medicine, and froze property of individuals and entities involved in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. The expanded sanctions block the property of persons "determined to be responsible for actions or decisions of the Syrian regime that undermine efforts to stabilize Iraq, or allow Syrian territory to be used for

this purpose." Bush's executive order said, "the Syrian regime continues to pursue other activities that...undercut the peace and stability of the region." (*JTA*, 2/14/08)

The White House's 2009 national budget includes a clause guaranteeing military aid to Egypt and Israel. All military financing for other countries will total \$4.58 billion, of which \$2.4 billion will go to Israel and \$1.3 billion to Egypt. The condition on the military aid requires that most weapons procurement must be from American defense contractors. In 2009, Israel will be allowed to spend \$631 million in Israel.