This is my last column as your President and I wanted to discuss one of our biggest pieces of unfinished business. Abortion rights are fast becoming a contradiction in terms. For over two decades we have been advocating for full reproductive rights for women and we have seen those rights become a privilege for the few. In this year’s health care debate, in order to get a bill in the House, a dreadful compromise had to be struck: health care for all, reproductive choice for none.

In Wichita, Kansas, Dr. George Tiller, a hero to women who most needed abortions, was murdered last year as he was attending church. The medical clinic that had been turned into a battle zone by right-to-life extremists, is shuttered. That leaves only one doctor left in the country who is skilled at late-term abortions and willing to perform them. Too bad he risks his life to do so.

I am fearful that Roe v. Wade is now up for grabs. The Supreme Court recently issued a decision that overturned established law from 100 years ago. The justices who issued the majority opinion had said in their Senate confirmation hearings that their judicial philosophy was to respect precedent. If Roe is challenged in court, will the same justices overturn this 38-year-old decision?

If JAC andlegions of women had not worked so hard, would there even be a shred of abortion rights left? We will continue the work of electing pro-choice members of Congress and hold them accountable to be pro-choice even when the tough votes are taken.

Your new President, Gail Yamner, will be installed in DC next week. Congratulations, Gail, and I wish you the best of luck and success.

Barbara Bluhm-Kaul
President, JAC

On my mind this month...
Research & Races

SENATE

Illinois -- The Illinois primary, the earliest in the nation, was held on February 2. Illinois Dem. state Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias will face GOP Rep. Mark Kirk for the seat previously held by President Barack Obama. Kirk is a moderate who received JAC support in the House, but recent votes on choice and separation moved him to the right. He is an outspoken supporter of Israel. Giannoulias has good position papers on Israel and separation and has been endorsed by Planned Parenthood. This race is likely to remain a “toss-up” until election day.

Indiana -- Dem. Senator Evan Bayh is not seeking a third term. Dem. Rep. Brad Ellsworth is running for his party’s nomination and Dem. Rep. Baron Hill is still considering the race. Both Ellsworth and Hill are “blue-dog” Democrats with good records on Israel and mixed records on separation. Ellsworth is anti-choice; Hill’s record is against funding and partial birth. The GOP field is also not final, but former Sen. Dan Coats has announced his intention to run. Bayh’s decision moves the seat into the “lean GOP” column.

HOUSE

Florida -- St. Sen. Ted Deutch won the Democratic special primary in Florida’s 19th district on February 2. JAC-supported Dem. Rep. Robert Wexler resigned from the House on January 3 to become the director of the Center for Middle East Peace. Deutch is expected to win the special general election on April 13. Unfortunately, he will have to run again in the August primary and the general in November but will definitely have the advantage of incumbency and JAC’s support.

Hawaii -- Democratic Rep. Neil Abercrombie plans to resign at the end of February to campaign for Governor. This seat should not be a GOP opportunity, but a crowded field and hotly contested Democratic battle could give Honolulu City Councilman Charles Djou an opportunity to win with less than 50% of the vote. It is as good a scenario as Republicans could hope for in this Democratic state and district where President Obama was born.

Illinois (10) -- This is an Open seat. GOP Rep. Mark Kirk is running for Senate. Democrat Dan Seals, who ran unsuccessfully for this seat twice, losing to Kirk with 46 and 47%, will face businessman Robert Dold. Seals has always been a strong candidate with good positions on JAC’s issues. He will have JAC’s support. Dold has not previously run for political office. He has a good position paper on Israel but has not furnished JAC with papers on either choice or separation. His office says he is “pro-choice,” but against funding, for parental notification and parental consent, and favors the ban on “partial birth” abortion.

Right Wing Watch

What is the Tea Party Movement? The name is obvious - the most famous antigovernment insurgent in American history, the Boston Tea Party of December 1773. Tea Party groups have taken roots across the country. The latest CBS News/New York Times poll says that approximately 1 in 5 adult Americans identifies with the Tea Party Movement. The movement claimed its first victory last month when Republican Scott Brown won the Massachusetts Senate seat previously held by Dem. Sen. Ted Kennedy. (After Brown’s vote yesterday to support the Administration’s jobs bill, the Tea Party movement may drop the newest Senator). Tea Partiers are conservative and angry, defined less by what they are for than what they oppose: big government and big government spending, especially bailouts and stimulus packages, high taxation and large deficits. They also oppose immigration, but many are strong libertarians and antiestablissement. They are working against “moderates” in the Republican Party, exemplified by their support of Marco Rubio in Florida against the state’s popular governor, Charlie Crist. Crist made the mistake of speaking positively about the President’s stimulus package. Keep an eye on the upcoming primaries - Texas is March 2. If the Tea Party movement can bring out its voters, the GOP nominees are likely to be from the right wing of the Republican Party, or you could see many more Independent candidates.

Choice, continued from page one

plate another viewpoint must also be allowed, but it does not address the funding aspects of the license plates. Choose life plates are available in 20 states at this time. 520,000 Choose Life plates have been sold since 2002 and have raised an estimated $11 million for pregnancy centers and adoption agencies. Abortion advocates are putting their own plate together hoping to gain similar financial benefits. But, Montana and Pennsylvania have pro-abortion plates and only 22 people in Pennsylvania have purchased the one sponsored by Planned Parenthood.

Israel, continued from page one

the West Bank and Gaza in order to achieve peace with Israel, and work with Turkey and Syria to rethink their own foreign policy. Haass believes that the world would be safer if this political change could occur, then this new government could emerge as a country at peace with itself and its neighbors. Obama started his presidency saying that he was willing to negotiate with Iran and many countries have seen how these negotiations have not worked. Iran needs to be stopped before it becomes more of a threat to the entire world. The damage created by Iran’s going nuclear could become catastrophic. (Washington Post 2/13/2010)