

JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

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On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

What started in Tunisia with a small band of protesters organized largely through Twitter and Facebook rapidly spread throughout the Middle East.

Large public protests forced authoritarian rulers to begin offering social reforms and more open discussions. As Americans, we welcome the move toward democracy but are cautious about the long-term outcomes.

Will these youthful protesters be able to stand up to more organized forces like the Muslim Brotherhood? Will Egypt adopt a free and open constitutional process? Will Shi'ite majorities force women into further retreat behind the veil? Will peace with Israel be part of the agenda?

History shows that revolutions have unexpected consequences. Toppling repressive regimes is no guarantee that democracy will emerge (Iran, 1979), nor do free elections necessarily bring favorable results (Hamas in Gaza, 2005). On the other hand, we can look to 1776 in America and have hope that this time will be different. We can hope that Israel might serve as a model for its neighbors of a more just and prosperous society.

We must do more than watch events play out in the Middle East. We must continue to advocate for the aid package that signals U.S. support for Israel and for countries in the region willing to make peace with Israel. With the mood in Congress to cut all programs, we must push back against those who would abrogate our commitment to Israel's security. **Join me in Washington, D.C. May 5th for the JAC Annual Meeting Fly-in. Together we will make our presence felt!**

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Israel

The U.S. vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution Feb. 18 claiming that Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are "illegal." On ABC's *This Week*, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told Christiane Amanpour, "...[I]t's been American policy for many years that settlements were illegitimate and it is the continuing goal and highest priority of the Obama administration to keep working toward a two-state solution...." The Palestinian resolution received 14 "yes" votes with only the U.S. voting "no." As a permanent member of the Security Council, a negative U.S. vote causes the measure to fail. To prevent the vote, President Obama telephoned Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas earlier in the week to work out a change in wording that would not force the U.S. to use its veto. Abbas refused, telling the Wall Street Journal that he is "facing internal challenges to his rule from within his Fatah party...that this wave that's hitting the Arab world may also hit him, so he's trying to make it look that he's actually sticking firm to Palestinian rights by pushing forward with this resolution." The statement made by Susan Rice, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., following the vote, was almost identical to Clinton's on Sunday morning. Rice also made clear that the Administration does not consider the U.N. to be the correct forum to deal with this issue.

Settlement construction must be discussed in direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. The U.S. continues to work toward getting the parties back to face-to-face talks. At the same time, the Palestinian Authority is considering other U.N. options, including seeking recognition as a member state of the U.N. That would require approval first by the Security Council and then by the General Assembly. The U.S. has publicly stated that it disapproves of that strategy, so again a U.S. veto in the Council could kill any attempt before it reaches the Assembly, where Palestinians appear to have strong support.

United States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The 112th Congress ran in 2010 on fiscal responsibility and job creation. Instead, they are spending a majority of their of time on women's reproductive rights rather than creating jobs. This week the House voted (240-185) to strip federal funding from Planned Parenthood as part of the Continuing Resolution (HR 1). Planned Parenthood is a major recipient of Title X funding which is being completely eliminated – 1/4 of its \$137 million budget comes from government funds. Planned Parenthood provides 25% of American women with health care including contraception, gynecological exams, HIV tests, cancer screenings and reproductive health services. Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) led the fight arguing that taxpayer money should not be used to fund abortion. Federal law (the Hyde amendment) bans the use of government funds for abortion services. Only 3% of Planned Parenthood services involve abortion and those services are provided with private funding.

During the floor fight, JAC-supported Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA) stood up and described her own abortion and tried to show how this anti-choice congress is hurting women's rights. Besides taking away important health care for women, this action is actually bad for the budget. Every dollar spent on family planning saves taxpayers \$4 on health care. (*Politico*, 2/11)

Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA) introduced the "Protect Life Act" (HR 358) which would prevent women from using their own money to buy abortion coverage. It would also allow hospitals to refuse women life saving treatment. This law would allow health care providers and institutions to refuse to provide medical services based on religious or personal objections even if the life of the mother was imminently at risk. Studies show that hospitals jeopardize patients' lives by refusing to conduct lifesaving medically necessary abortions. (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2/11)

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Research & Races

2012 SENATE UPDATE

Senators Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico and Jim Webb of Virginia have announced their intention to retire.

New Mexico – Bingaman is serving his 5th term and JAC has supported him throughout his tenure. In 2010, Republicans elected the governor and made considerable gains in the state legislature. Bingaman's retirement moves the race from "likely Democratic" to "toss-up." Democratic Representatives Martin Heinrich and Ben Lujan are possible candidates for their party's nomination. Former Rep. Heather Wilson and former Gov. Gary Johnson are potential GOP nominees.

Virginia – Jim Webb is completing his first term in the Senate. He barely defeated former GOP Gov. George Allen who announced his intention to regain his seat even before Webb announced his retirement. It is unlikely that Allen will have a primary challenge unless it comes from the Tea Party. Several names are being mentioned as potential Democratic candidates, but all are waiting to see if former governor and

DNC chairman Tim Kaine chooses to run. The nomination is his if he makes a positive decision.

Connecticut – This is an open seat due to Senator Joe Lieberman's retirement. The following Democrats are eyeing the race: Rep. Chris Murphy, former Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz, and Rep. Joe Courtney. On the Republican side, two 2010 Senate candidates – former Rep. Rob Simmons and World Wrestling Entertainment executive Linda McMahon – are floated as potential contenders. Although Connecticut is a "blue" state, any open seat is an opportunity for the party out of power.

Florida – Several names are being mentioned to challenge JAC-supported Senator Bill Nelson (D), now in his 2nd term. George LeMieux, who was appointed by then Governor Charlie Crist to fill the vacancy that occurred when GOP Sen. Mel Martinez retired in the middle of his term, would be a strong candidate and is seriously considering the race. Also, Mike Haridopolos, President of the State Senate, is

also mentioned and has not denied his interest. Florida elected both a Republican governor and Republican senator in 2010, leaving Nelson vulnerable and putting this race in the "toss-up" column.

Montana – Jon Tester won election in 2006 defeating GOP incumbent Conrad Burns by less than 4000 votes. GOP Rep. Dennis Rehberg has already declared his intention to challenge Tester, moving this race to the "toss-up" column as well. JAC supported Tester in his first run and will do so again.

Ohio – Freshman Senator Sherrod Brown is a predictable progressive vote for Democrats. Ohio replaced its Democratic governor with a conservative Republican in 2012 and another conservative Republican took the seat left vacant by retiring GOP Sen. George Voinovich. Ohio is also facing a budget crisis and Gov. John Kasich is taking on the unions. There are no announced GOP candidates as yet, but there is also no question that Brown is vulnerable and will have a tough race. As in 2006, JAC will support Brown.

Right Wing Watch

Koch Industries is the country's second largest privately run company. Its products include Lycra and Coolmax fibers, Brawny paper towels and Stainmaster carpets. Last year, Forbes magazine listed the brothers, David and Charles, as the nation's fifth richest people, each worth \$21.5 billion. The Kochs political arm, Americans For Prosperity (AFP), was started by David Koch and Richard Fink (on the board of directors of Koch Industries). AFP's agenda includes repealing healthcare reform, opposing any climate change legislation, reducing regulation of the oil and gas industry, continuing to lower taxes, and decreasing the size of government. The power of the Koch brothers donations becomes evident looking at the makeup of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Donations amounting to

\$279,500 were made to 22 Republican members and \$32,000 to 5 Democratic members of the committee. Five of the GOP freshmen on the panel were helped by the group's advertising and grassroots efforts during the 2010 campaign. Nine of the new GOP members signed a pledge distributed by Americans For Prosperity to oppose the Obama administration's proposal to regulate greenhouse gases. An early "top goal" is to restrict the reach of the Environment Protection Agency. One of the freshmen hired a former Koch Industries lawyer as his Chief of Staff. Now the Koch brothers plan to contribute and steer a total of \$88 million to conservative causes during the 2012 election cycle. Koch Industries has been sponsoring twice-a-year donor summits since 2003. The conferences bring together about 150

wealthy conservative business heads to hear presentations from Republican politicians and think tank leaders. At the most recent summit in Rancho Mirage, California, in January, the Kochs and their invited donors pledged to contribute \$49 million toward the \$88 million budget goal. According to *Politico.com*, most of the donations pledged at the Koch summits goes into a pool, which typically include a mix of cash from invitees and the Koch brothers themselves. The brothers' political advisers distribute the money at their discretion to political and policy groups featured at their conferences. Technically the Kochs do not control any groups but exert significant influence through their contributions, board positions and patronage of the organizations featured at their donor conferences. (*latimes.com*; *Politico.com*)

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Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) introduced HR 3 which would make the Hyde amendment permanent as well as expand restrictions on federal funding.

On a good note, the Obama administration rescinded most of a federal regulation that was designed to protect health care workers who refuse to

provide care they find objectionable on personal or religious grounds. The Bush administration put this into effect during his final days in office. (*Washington Post*, 2/11) Health care workers can still refuse to perform an abortion, but they can not refuse to offer contraception, infertility treatment or end of life care.

As social conservatives continue their fight against women's reproductive rights, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) says, "...[T]his legislation has awoken the sleeping giant of my generation. It's been complacent for so many years, taking the right to choose for granted, thinking it's never under assault." (*The Hill*, 2/11)