

JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

February 22, 2012

On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

JAC's core issues of separation of religion and state and women's reproductive rights merged in the debate over President Obama's ruling on the health care religious exemption. The Catholic Bishops and their supporters regard it as a case of government interfering with the free exercise of religion -- a violation of first amendment rights. Is the government dictating to the Church that it must go against its doctrine and provide birth control? Or is the Catholic Church forcing its dogma on people of other faiths and jeopardizing women's health.

The uproar over the President's decision was deafening. Many normally moderate voices like David Brooks and more liberal ones like Mark Shields condemned the ruling. They could not understand that the rights of women, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, were being violated by the Church. President Obama tried to resolve the matter by having insurance companies bear the cost and provide the outreach to employees at Church-sponsored non-religious facilities. Moderate voices were calmed but not those who believe that the will of the Church supersedes women's health and Constitutional principles.

Caught in the middle are millions of women: from students at Catholic-affiliated universities to employees of Catholic hospitals. Affordability, necessary treatment for medical conditions, and pregnancy prevention are no small matters for many women. Neither is the wall of separation that is supposed to protect freedom of religion. John F. Kennedy said it best. "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the president -- should he be Catholic...how to act...."

JAC NEWSbreak, for JAC Leadership Circle, is a monthly publication of JAC PAC.
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Israel

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be a keynote speaker at the annual AIPAC Conference March 4 and 5 and will meet with President Obama on March 5. Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon spoke with Israel radio following the announcement of the Prime Minister's upcoming trip and said that "ties between the US and Israeli administrations were solid...cooperation between the two countries was strong." Regarding Iran, he said, "there was no crisis [between Israel and the US] and the countries were working together." (*The Times of Israel*, 2/20)

Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), and Robert Casey (D-PA) have introduced a resolution that attempts to bring US policy on Iran closer to Israel's approach. The resolution, which currently has 32 co-sponsors, "affirms that it is a vital national interest of the United States to prevent the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability." This is actually a toned-down resolution. The original language that was removed would have said "it is within the power and capabilities of the United States Government to prevent the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability."

A number of senators asked Graham to remove what they called saber rattling language. Apparently several senators asked Graham to include an explicit denial that the resolution authorized military action. He refused. "We 32 original sponsors of this Senate resolution want to say clearly and resolutely to Iran: You have only two choices -- peacefully negotiate to end your nuclear weapons program or expect a military strike to end that program," Senator Lieberman said at a February 16th news conference.

According to the JTA, those attending the AIPAC conference in early

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United States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

On February 16, GOP Rep. Darrell Issa, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, held a hearing on religious freedom and the mandate that health insurers cover contraception for employees of religiously affiliated institutions whose religious views are against such coverage. The first of two panels was all male. The panel met with instant criticism from female members of the House and Senate. "Imagine they're having a panel on women's health, and they don't have any women on the panel -- duh!" House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said. "What is it that men don't understand about women's health and how central the issue of family planning is to that?" Democratic women members of the Committee walked out in protest. The title of the hearing was "Lines Crossed: Separation of Church and State. Has the Obama Administration Trampled on Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Conscience?" No one on either the all male morning panel or the afternoon panel, which included two women opposed to the insurance coverage, was called to testify in support of the administration's proposed mandate. *The Los Angeles Times*, in an editorial on February 19, called this nothing but "political theater."

In Kansas, anti-choice groups and GOP lawmakers are proposing legislation requiring women to undergo a sonogram and listen to the fetal heartbeat before receiving an abortion. Abortion providers would be required to inform women of a link between abortion and breast cancer and reproductive health problems -- links that have been widely discredited.

In Virginia, state Delegate David Englin calls his state's proposed mandatory ultrasound "state sanctioned rape." Women in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy would be required to undergo a transvaginal ultrasound procedure. It would subject women to a medically unnecessary and invasive

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Research & Races

2012 HOUSE RACES (continued from last month)

The makeup of the current House of Representatives is 193 Democrats and 242 Republicans. Democrats need a net win of 25 seats to regain the majority (218). There are 15 open Democratic seats and 12 open Republican seats. As noted last month, districts could become open because of redrawn district lines and added districts based on the 2010 census. The following states are gaining districts; Arizona (1), Florida (2), Georgia (1), Nevada (1), South Carolina (1), Texas (4), Utah (1), Washington (1). The following states are losing districts: Illinois (1), Iowa (1), Louisiana (1), Massachusetts (1), Michigan (1), Missouri (1), New Jersey (1), New York (2), Ohio (2), Pennsylvania (1). The gains are mostly in the Southwest and South; the losses are primarily in the East and industrial Midwest. The task of redrawing district lines falls to state legislatures, with a few exceptions where voters have approved independent commissions. The seven states with only a single district remain unchanged. Redistricting has not been completed in all 50 states.

The following House races are on JAC's radar screen right now:

MN-08 - Freshman GOP Rep. Chip Cravaack won this seat with under 50% in 2010. His votes have followed the Party line. Of the four Democrats who have declared, the frontrunner is former state Senator **Tarryl Clark** who ran in 2010 against Michele Bachmann. JAC supported Clark in that race.

MO-02 - JAC-supported Democratic Rep. **Russ Carnahan** is running in a new district after his district was eliminated. The 2nd district is open as its current member, GOP Rep. Todd Akin is running for the Senate. Carnahan has no primary opposition at this time, whereas three Republicans are vying for their party's nomination. The demographics do not help Carnahan.

NV-01 - Former JAC-supported Democratic Rep. **Dina Titus**, defeated in 2010 for her 3rd district seat, is running in Nevada's 1st district, currently held by JAC member and JAC-supported Senate candidate **Shelley Berkley**. In this district Titus is the favorite and should be returned to the House.

NV-04 - This is a new district, gained by Nevada because of its population increase. It covers the south central part of the state and the northern Las Vegas suburbs and demographically should elect a Democrat. State Senator Steven Horsford is the only Democrat declared at this time. There is a three-way contested GOP primary, to be held in June.

NJ-03 - Shelley Adler, former Cherry Hill Councilwoman and widow of JAC-supported former Democratic Rep. **John Adler** is running in this district, challenging freshman GOP Rep. Jon Runyan. It was an uphill battle when her husband held this seat and nothing has changed.

NJ-09 - Two Democratic congressmen with positive records on JAC's issues will face off in a primary in this

district – current 8th district Rep. Bill Pascrell and 9th district incumbent Rep. **Steve Rothman**. In this contest we will win a friend and lose one.

NY-09 - The dates for New York's filing deadline and primary are still to be determined. GOP Rep. Bob Turner won this seat in a special election after Democrat Rep. Anthony Wiener resigned. The district demographics do not favor the GOP and Turner's votes have almost all followed the party line. He is being challenged by state Assemblyman Rory Lancman, whose positions on our issues are as yet unknown.

NY-26 - Democratic Rep. **Kathy Hochul** barely won this seat in a special election last May with 47%. This is a swing district, with voter registration favoring the GOP. Hochul will need help to keep her seat in November.

OH-16 - JAC-supported 13th district Democratic Rep. **Betty Sutton** is running in this merged district and will face freshman GOP Rep. Jim Renacci. Demographics slightly favor Renacci but Sutton is currently serving her 3rd term in a nearby district and has good name ID. This will be a toss-up until the end. Neither candidate has a primary opponent.

OR-01 - Having just been sworn in to represent this district, Democratic Rep. **Suzanne Bonamici** will have to run again in November. It is too early to tell if this will be a rematch with GOP nominee Rob Cornilles. JAC helped Bonamici in the special election for the seat vacated by Rep. David Wu.

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procedure without their consent. The transvaginal ultrasound is also being considered in Texas and Iowa.

The Oklahoma state Senate voted 34-8 to pass the "Personhood Act" which defines the word person under

state law to include unborn children from the moment of conception. The measure now goes to the House. Oklahoma's Republican Governor Mary Fallin signed every anti-abortion bill sent to her last year.

In Iowa, a new bill was introduced that would make feticide -- defined as performing or causing an abortion at any time during a pregnancy -- a Class A felony punishable by up to 10 years and a fine of no more than \$10,000.

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March will be lobbying on this resolution when they go on the Hill to visit members. Fifteen of the 32 backers are in the Democratic caucus, but several pro-Israel stalwarts are missing – Senator Carl Levin (D-MI), chair of the Armed Services Committee, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), the Senate Majority Whip and Senator Barbara

Boxer (D-CA) of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has asked the Obama administration to adopt Israel's "capability" standard. Graham suggested that the reason for adopting Israel's "red line" would be "to keep Israel from going it alone." Graham

will be visiting Israel shortly and plans to meet with Netanyahu. "I will convey to the Israeli prime minister: We expect you never to lose control of your own destiny....Please understand that we share your view that Iran should not have a nuclear weapons capability."