

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

March 24, 2010

On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

On Sunday, the House passed HR 3590, The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. While it may not be everything we had hoped for, it begins to address one of the most compelling and vexing issues of our day. Our health care system has drained the finances, broken the spirits, and caused premature death in too many American families. Women have been disproportionately affected. This legislation will:

- End the practice of denying coverage due to pre-existing conditions, which to some insurers presently include rape, c-section, and pregnancy
- End lifetime caps on coverage
- Mandate coverage without co-pays for preventive screenings such as mammograms and pap smears
- Stop insurance companies from charging women more than men for the same policy (gender rating)
- Stop insurance companies from canceling coverage as soon as the insured gets sick
- Allow parents to keep dependent children on the policy until they reach the age of 26

We are dismayed that abortion was used as a bargaining tool and that all the media attention was focused on Stupak. Pro-choice members of Congress worked just as diligently behind the scenes to limit the restrictions.

Please thank your representatives if they voted in favor, especially those who believe they did so at their own peril come November and those who worked against Stupak. You can reach them by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-225-3121. We hope the 2010 midterm election will be perilous for those who ignored the needs of their constituents by voting no.

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Israel

Since March 12 when, during vice President Biden's trip to Israel, Israeli Interior Minister Eli Yishai announced plans to build 1600 housing units in East Jerusalem, relations between the United States and Israel have been called into question. Biden "condemned" Israel for the untimely announcement, which was a personal embarrassment. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apologized for the announcement, not the housing construction. The Palestinian Authority was quick to call the building plans an expansion of settlements and a reason to step back from the proximity talks which had been agreed to after many months without peace process negotiations. Over the past two weeks, the rhetoric has calmed down. All the important players involved – President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton and Prime Minister Netanyahu – have publicly stated that the United States and Israel remain strong allies and friends. Clinton, speaking at the AIPAC Annual Meeting on March 21, began her speech by saying, "For President Obama, for me, and for this entire administration, our commitment to Israel's security and Israel's future is rock solid. Guaranteeing Israel's security is more than a public position for me. It is a personal commitment that will never waver."

Netanyahu spoke March 22nd to an audience that included members of Congress, Ambassador Michael Oren, Israel Ministers Uzi Landau and Ehud Barak, AIPAC's new President Lee Rosenberg and conference participants. "As the world faces monumental challenges, I know that Israel and America will face them together... We stand together because we are fired by the same ideals and inspired by the same dream – the dream of achieving security, prosperity and peace." Netanyahu said the future of Israel can never depend on the "goodwill" of others. "Israel must always reserve the right to defend itself." On the issue of Jerusalem, "the Jewish people were building Jerusalem 3,000 years ago and the Jewish people are

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United States

CHOICE

On a motion to concur with previous Senate amendments, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed the House of Representatives on March 21 by a vote of 219 to 212. Abortion opponents were divided as to whether the bill went far enough. Pro-choice advocates are not happy with the additional restrictions that go beyond the current Hyde amendment ban on the use of federal funds for abortions. Under the new measure, any one who purchases health insurance through an insurance exchange could choose a plan that covers abortion, but would have to pay for that additional coverage with a separate check, to ensure the funds are not mingled. (There seems to be a difference of opinion on what the wording in the bills means as to whether the two check provision pertains to everyone or to only those receiving a government subsidy.) Anti-abortion lawmakers wanted a total ban, but the two-check system will remain. President Obama agreed to sign an executive order, after the bill becomes law, reiterating that no federal money would go to abortion coverage and directing federal agencies to set up guidelines for states to determine whether insurers are in compliance. Current law, the Hyde Amendment, first enacted in 1976, bans federal funding for abortion. States could ban abortion coverage in plans offered through the exchange. Exceptions would be made for cases of rape, incest and danger to the life of the mother.

Family Planning Health Services in Wausau, Wisconsin, has been targeted by anti-choice protestors who use misleading signs and slogans to block visibility for traffic and harass patients and staff members. In response, the Wisconsin Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin Foundation have created the Forty 4 Forty pledge campaign. The anti-choice movement refers to "40 Days for Life," which manifests itself in "40 Days

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Research & Races

March Madness

We are watching the upcoming races and wondering if the term “March Madness” is apropos. JAC-supported representatives who voted to improve conditions for constituents hard-hit by recession are considered vulnerable because of their stimulus and health care votes.

Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) is a freshman Democrat who defeated a GOP opponent in 2008 in a district that leans Republican. She is a strong campaigner and a good fundraiser. In November, she will face Iraq war veteran Adam Kinzinger. Voters in this district will be affected by the mood of the nation as a whole. Halvorson’s “yes” on the health care bill was a vote that increases her vulnerability.

Ron Klein (FL-22) is a visible and vocal supporter for Israel who serves on the House foreign affairs committee. His opponent in 2010 is Alan West, an African American, whom he defeated in 2008 with 55%. West, who was dishonorably discharged from the army after a 2003 altercation, has a big YouTube following. He is able to raise huge sums of money with long winded, anti-Islam, right wing speeches.

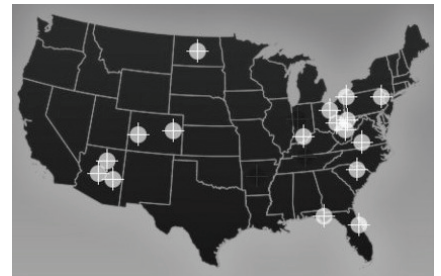
Patrick Murphy (PA-08) served honorably in the Iraq war and is a staunch defender of Israel. Murphy sits on the Armed Services and Intelligence committees. Murphy is a pro-choice Catholic and voted for the health care bill in a district that has a large health care industry. His race against former GOP Rep. Mike Fitzgerald, was close in 2008 and could go the way of the overall national trend in 2010.

Gabrielle Giffords (AZ-08) is a great campaigner, but she has a much stronger opponent than she has faced in her past two races. Jonathan Paton is an Iraq war veteran, former state senator and an excellent candidate. Gifford’s “yes” vote for the health care bill may be used against her. She said “this vote was the right thing to do” for her community. Her district office was vandalized shortly after the vote.

Betsy Markey (CO-04) is one of the most endangered freshmen in a district with more registered Republicans than Democrats. The district voted for McCain in 2008. Her opponent Cory Gardner, is supported by the Tea Party and hopes to take advantage of Markey’s “yes” votes on the stimulus and the health care bills.

Mark Schauer (MI-07) is a liberal Democrat who took over a formerly Republican seat. His health care vote might be used against him if the district decides to vote against the Democratic party. The GOP field is still unclear but all of the possible candidates are right wing in their views.

The above representatives (and more) are in the GOP crosshairs, as featured in a creepy Sarah Palin e-mail that



looks to us like incitement to gun violence. If they lose, the makeup of Congress will change dramatically. These members need to know that JAC stands by them. They need our dollars – and our votes, if we live in their districts. The best way to say “Thank You” for their votes on our issues is to help them win in November. Through JAC you can donate to their campaigns and make sure your viewpoint continues to be expressed.

Right Wing Watch

Virginia “Ginni” Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas became a news story recently when she began “promoting her new Web site called LIBERTY CENTRAL, described as an online community for those seeking to “preserve freedom and reaffirm the core founding principles” of the founding fathers and the constitution. (BLT, blog of the NYT, 2/23/10) According to the Washington Post

(3/16/10), Liberty Central will be a lobbying and political organizing group that will cater to the citizen activists of the Tea Party movement. In Thomas’s fight for liberty and against the liberal Washington agenda, she will use the recent Supreme Court ruling allowing corporate money in election races to her benefit. This group may raise and spend corporate money freely to advocate for or against candidates for

office. This group plans to issue score cards for members of Congress. Liberty Central will also be able to raise corporate money and largely avoid disclosing its donors. (LATimes.com, 3/15/2010) There is concern that this involvement by the wife of a Supreme Court Justice could test the traditional notions of political impartiality for the Court, especially if donor corporations have cases before the Court.

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of Harassment” and a constant 40-day presence outside of clinics. The Forty 4 Forty campaign is asking people to contribute a flat amount based on

the 40 Days of organized harassment, or make a pledge per protester. The pledges will be added to the sign outside Family Planning Health Services

to let the protesters know how much money has been raised for NARAL and Wisconsin Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

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building Jerusalem today. Jerusalem is not a settlement. It is our capital.” Both Rosenberg and AIPAC Executive Director Howard Kohr said that disagreements will inevitably arise as they do between friends. Disagreements “should be resolved privately as befitting close allies.”

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, an increasing majority of Palestinians believe that reports about financial corruption and sex scandals within the Palestinian Authority are accurate. The government of President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has been weakened and

its legitimacy threatened. The poll, conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research also found that Abbas’ popularity has dropped, while that of Hamas’ prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, has risen. Municipal elections are scheduled for July.