

JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

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On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

Engagement is my thought for the month. Recently we have witnessed upheaval in the Middle East. When individuals are mobilized to act, the results can be stunning, even though the outcome can never be guaranteed. Here at home we have witnessed a clash of values: the legislative assault on women led by the majority leadership in the House of Representatives. Many of us are content to read the papers, shake our heads and pontificate on issues without leaving the comfort of our sofas. Can we venture beyond? Can we ignite the passion we see on the streets of the Middle East and in the anti-choice legislatures?

Answer yes. Be visible and vocal. On April 7th I invite you to join me and other JAC members at a pro-choice Rally in DC where we will demonstrate that women will not be denied the right to an abortion, the right to contraception, the right to benefit from scientific research using embryonic stem cells, the right of poor women to have access to family planning, and the right to choose birth control and abortion services as part of health insurance coverage. These rights are under attack. We must act to restore them in practice and keep government out of our most private decisions.

Come to DC May 5th. JAC offers the best way to be politically engaged. Join me at the JAC Annual Meeting where we will meet with members of Congress to discuss our many concerns, including strategies to counter these outrages. We will learn the background details and be armed with the right information to promote our issues. This is the time to get off the sofa and on the plane or train and come to DC. The threats that we are facing may be forestalled with a veto by the President or a no vote by the Senate, but the attacks will continue and rescue may not always be at hand. Unless we are engaged, our rights will become memories.

Israel

On March 23rd, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Meron Reuben, sent letters to the head of the UN Security Council and to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to express his "grave concern in the face of a very serious escalation of Palestinian terrorist attacks targeting innocent Israeli civilians, which threatens to undermine stability in our region." (JTA, 3/11)

March has been a tragic month for Israel. March 11th: Palestinian terrorists entered an Israeli home and brutally murdered 5 members of the Fogel family including 3 children, ages 2 to 11. March 13th: Palestinians named a town square in the West Bank after a terrorist involved in the killing of 37 Israelis after a bus hijacking. March 19th: Hamas forces in Gaza bombarded the Negev with over 50 rockets. March 23rd: a bomb exploded next to a bus in Central Jerusalem killing 1 and wounding 30. March 24th: 6 rockets from Gaza entered Ashdod. In response Israel has been striking smuggling tunnels in Gaza and other terrorist targets. Israeli citizens are feeling deliberately targeted. Schools in Beersheba, Kiryat Gat and Ashdod were closed this week, as was the entrance to the city of Jerusalem. Mayors in these towns say they could not take responsibility for endangering the security of any child in the city. (*Jerusalem Post*, 3/24/11)

These sustained attacks affect children and adults trying to live normal lives. Speaking at a joint press conference with US Defense Secretary Robert Gates in Tel Aviv, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said Israel will not tolerate firing against its citizens. He said the IDF knows what it needs to do and will work to

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United States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Last month, in the Continuing Resolution to fund the government, the House voted to eliminate all Title X funding and to defund Planned Parenthood. The Senate passed its version of the Continuing Resolution, only good until April 8, without killing Title X and eviscerating Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood provides approximately 2 1/2 million women with birth control counseling and performs mammograms and pap smears on several million more. As Congress continues to fight the budget battle, the House leaders have made it clear that if they cannot remove the appropriation for Planned Parenthood or the family planning money from Title X, they will do so through separate legislation. HR 3, introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), known as the "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act," currently has 221 sponsors (218 needed for passing) and could be brought to the floor at any time.

Call your representative and two senators (Capitol Switchboard 202-224-3121). Ask them to oppose any legislation that restricts women's access to both reproductive and general health care.

Five states have passed bills that will prohibit private health insurance plans sold on the new state-based insurance exchanges from covering abortion, except to save the mother's life. Twenty-two other states are considering similar measures. The new healthcare legislation allows abortion coverage, but everyone who buys such a plan must make two separate premium payments – one for the bulk of the policy and another, as little as \$1 per month, for the plan's abortion coverage. Anti-abortion groups call this "an accounting gimmick." Thus the push for prohibitive legislation.

"Personhood" bills are making their way through state legislatures. In North Dakota, the bill would define fertilized eggs as "persons." Nebraska has banned abortions after

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Research & Races

2012 OUTLOOK: HOUSE

All 435 districts will be redrawn before the 2012 elections. The biggest states - California, Florida, New York and Texas - will account for 33% of seats in the next Congress. California continues to have 53 seats; Florida will gain 2 seats bringing its congressional delegation to 27; New York loses 1 seat giving it 28; Texas gains 4, raising its tally to 36. Six states place the power to redistrict in the hands of a bipartisan, nonpartisan and/or citizen-based commission - Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, New Jersey and Washington. State legislatures control the process in the remaining states. If no final results are reached, the process ends up in court. In a state such as Illinois, which is losing a seat, and where a Democratic legislature will make the decisions, it is likely that two Republicans could end up in the same district competing against each other. On the other side, Texas Republicans are likely to draw four new districts to GOP advantage.

SENATE UPDATE

There are 51 Democrats, 47 Republicans, and 2 Independents who caucus with the Democrats. Republicans need a net gain of 4 seats to take control. Democrats are defending 23 seats, Republicans 10.

STATES TO WATCH

Massachusetts -- GOP Sen. Scott Brown was the surprise winner in the 2008 special election. Massachusetts favors Democrats but there is no frontrunner for the Democratic nomination, thus the "toss-up" designation.

Missouri-- Senator Claire McCaskill (D) finds herself fighting an ethics scandal over unpaid taxes. Missouri is not hospitable to Democrats and this will make the race that much tougher. The GOP primary is heating up between former state Treasurer Sarah Steelman and Former Senator Blunt's Chief of Staff Ed Martin.

Montana-- Freshman Senator Jon Tester (D) faces the state's only congressman, Rep. Dennis Rehberg. Rehberg has represented Montana for 12 years and won in 2010 with 60%.

Nebraska-- Senator Ben Nelson (D) already has two top-tier opponents: Attorney General Jon Bruning and state Treasurer and former Attorney General Don Stenberg.

Ohio -- Senator Sherrod Brown (D) could face any GOP member of the Ohio delegation, state Treasurer Josh Mandel, Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, or former Attorney General Betty Montgomery. Unless the job numbers improve, Brown is in trouble.

West Virginia -- Senator Joe Manchin (D) won a special election to fill the unexpired term of the late Senator Robert Byrd (D). Manchin is anti-choice and pro-gun, but a strong GOP candidate will give him trouble.

OPEN SEATS (incumbent not running)

Arizona-- This seat, held by GOP Sen. Jon Kyl, favors the GOP. The only declared candidate is Rep. Jeff Flake (R). The only Democrat who might have captured this seat is Rep. Gaby Giffords, currently recovering from an assassination attempt.

Connecticut-- This seat favors Democrats although the 2010 race between Dem. Sen. Richard Blumenthal and GOP candidate Linda McMahon was closer than expected. There will be a Democratic primary between Sec. of State Susan Bysiewicz and Rep. Chris Murphy. McMahon could run again.

Hawaii-- Hawaii has always been considered a Democratic state, but if former GOP Gov. Laura Lingle runs, this could be a horserace.

Nevada -- GOP Rep. Dean Heller hopes to keep this seat in the GOP column. Several Democrats are looking, but no one has declared. Nevada has been hard hit by the recession and this race will be tight until the end.

New Mexico-- This is definitely in the "toss-up" column. Former GOP Rep. Heather Wilson has declared and received the endorsement of the establishment. Several Democrats are mentioned, including both Dem. Reps.

North Dakota -- Another "toss-up" race, but the state leans Republican. There are no announced candidates from either party.

Texas -- GOP Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison is retiring. The other sitting Senator is Republican, the Governor is Republican, and the state legislature is Republican. It's hard to see a Democrat taking this seat.

Virginia -- If former Governor and DNC chairman Tim Kaine runs, this will be a real contest. Former GOP Senator and Governor George Allen wants his Senate seat back.

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20 weeks. In Iowa, a woman can be arrested for accidentally putting a wanted fetus in danger in the second trimester.

South Dakota's governor signed a bill March 22nd that makes the state the first to require women who are seeking abortions to attend a consultation

at "pregnancy help centers," designed to encourage the "mother to keep and care for the child." The legislation also establishes the nation's longest waiting period – three days – after an initial visit with an abortion provider, before the procedure can be performed.

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)

and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) have introduced the "Repealing Ineffective and Incomplete Abstinence-Only Program Funding Act" which would strike the main funding for the programs and instead fund \$50 million a year of comprehensive sex education programs that include abstinence.

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make sure there is not an escalation.

Recent unrest in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, Jordan and Libya has Israel concerned about whether fundamentalist Islamic factions will be part of leadership in these new governments. Israel is nervous about cur-

rent relationships and peace treaties. Syria, which is on Israel's northern border, and has always been antagonistic towards the Jewish state, has had deadly protests and crackdowns in its major cities. Security forces killed fifteen protesters after a week of unrest. Despite the force, 20,000

Syrians marched and chanted freedom slogans in the city of Deraa. Opposition groups have been banned in Syria since the Baath Party took power in a 1963 coup. (*LA Times*, 3/23/11) The protesters, like others in the Middle East, are revolting against government corruption and cronyism.