

JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

March 22, 2012

On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

There is a moment in all our lives when we realize that we must take a stand. We must get off the fence and throw ourselves into the fray. The time is now. We know the

obstacles. The challenge is to seize the opportunity and come to DC with JAC.

Iran is threatening the very existence of Israel with the building of its nuclear program. The news mediums are full of conflicting information on the timing, the meaning and the need for action. Learn and question experts about the threat. Don't rely on distorted accounts.

The War on Women is not a made up media term. It is real. In over 26 states there are pending, proposed or passed laws that virtually make reproductive choice moot. Laws controlling women's right to medical privacy, family planning and health care are impacting the lives of women right now. Do you really want to go back to backroom alley abortions and government mandated laws about your body? Learn how you can be effective in the struggle.

Religion is one of the strongest rallying cries of the primaries. Candidates in the primaries proclaim their strong moral beliefs and Christian values. These beliefs are supposed to govern the rest of us. Do you want Catholic Bishops to control your lives?

JAC in DC is powerful. Small groups of women and men meet with Congressional leaders to express our views. Even if you have been to DC with other, larger groups, JAC offers a more up-close and personal experience. Our voices are really heard. We need more of you to commit to coming this year. Change your plans. Help chart a path that fights for Israel, women and separation. JOIN US.

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

As of March 12, Palestinians had fired more than 250 rockets and mortar rounds from Gaza into southern Israel. That was the 4th straight day of rockets. More than 200,000 school children were told to stay home as a safety precaution. Southern Israel has been a target since the Israelis withdrew from Gaza, but the danger is far greater now than it was then. In 2000, the rockets had a range of 4-6 kilometers and could reach approximately 30,000 people. In 2012, the rockets have a range of 45 kilometers and affect a population of 1 million. This round of violence erupted after the Israeli Air Force killed Zuhar al-Qaissi, a commander of the Palestinian Resistance Committee (PRC) who planned to wage a large-scale attack on Israel's border with Egypt. A cease-fire has been negotiated but sporadic rockets continue as they did all last year. Fifty-six rockets were fired in February. According to *Reuters*, the Iron Dome missile defense system intercepted the vast majority of rockets fired, including those aimed at urban centers. The system, the first of its kind in the world, was developed by Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems with the help of US funding. It is designed to intercept rockets and artillery shells fired from a range of between 4 and 70 kilometers. Three batteries have been deployed since March 2011 around Ashkelon, Ashdod and Beersheva. Experts say a total of 13 batteries are needed to give a full nationwide umbrella.

Israelis have learned to cope with rocket fire and feel that their defense systems can mitigate the danger. But the imminent threat of a nuclear Iran is another matter entirely. President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu met in Washington on March 5. According to reports, they had a frank discussion and talked about the timeline for expected developments in Iran's uranium enrichment program. No firm commitments were made on how their governments would respond.

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United States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

When President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act, women's groups were excited about the increased coverage and fairness for women in the insurance market. Pre-existing conditions were disallowed, fair pricing for women was mandated, and women's "issues" were taken into account. When Kathleen Sebelius announced the mandate for insurance companies to cover the cost of preventive medicine, including birth control, women were again thankful for the important coverage and the cost savings. However, anti-choice legislators had begun a full fledged "war on women."

The Blunt Amendment was introduced in the Senate March 1st. By a vote of 51-48, a bill was narrowly defeated that would have allowed any employer with moral objections to opt out of the birth control coverage rule. (*Washington Post* 3/1/12) Catholic churches and other religious institutions were already exempt, but Sen. Blunt (R-MO) and anti-choice members tried to give a religious exemption to any employer. Opponents of the bill pointed out that the amendment not only would have allowed employers to cherry-pick women's health care options based on moral beliefs, but it also would have rolled back some of the basic anti-discrimination protections in the Affordable Care Act. For example, under the amendment, an employer could refuse to cover things like HIV/AIDS screenings, prenatal care for single mothers, mammograms, vaccinations for children and even screenings for diabetes based on objections to a perceived immoral lifestyle. (*Huffington Post* 3/1/12).

As people fight over the rights of religious institutions to be free from government regulations, a new phenomenon is taking place. Hospitals are merging as health care costs are increasing across the country. As a result, Catholic Hospitals own 15 percent of the hospital beds in America,

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Research & Races

2012 PRIMARIES

The primary season has arrived. Congressional primaries do not always take place on the same day as the presidential primaries. Two states, Illinois and Ohio held both their presidential and congressional primaries this month. Several results are of interest to JAC.

ILLINOIS

The following JAC congressional friends should sail to victory in November: Democrats Bobby Rush (01), Luis Gutierrez (04), Mike Quigley (05), and Jan Schakowsky (09), who had little or no primary opposition, and Jesse Jackson Jr. (02), who defeated former Rep. Debbie Halvorson by double digits.

IL 08 -- Former Asst. Veterans Affairs Secretary and '06 candidate Tammy Duckworth won the Democratic primary and will face incumbent GOP Rep. and extreme Tea Partier Joe Walsh. Duckworth's Democratic primary opponent was also good on JAC's issues so the PAC was not involved in the primary. JAC will support Duckworth

in the general.

IL 10 -- Business consultant Brad Schneider defeated progressive activist Ilya Sheyman (both are JAC members) and two others to win a hard fought Democratic primary. Schneider will face 1st term Rep. Robert Dold (R) in November. This race will likely be a toss-up until then, although demographics slightly favor Democrats. Dold has an excellent record on Israel. His claims to be a moderate are belied by negative votes on choice and separation. JAC is in with Schneider.

IL 11 -- Former Rep. Bill Foster (D) defeated two opponents to win the Democratic primary in this newly drawn district. He will face incumbent GOP Rep. Judy Biggert, whose current district was dismantled. Both have received JAC support. This is a toss-up.

IL 17 -- Cheri Bustos, currently President of the board of directors of the Women's Connection, one of Illinois' largest women's membership organizations, will face incumbent 1st

term GOP Rep. Bobby Schilling. This district was held by JAC friends Lane Evans and Phil Hare for a long time. Schilling was swept in last cycle. JAC is supporting Bustos.

OHIO

The Senate race in Ohio is now set. JAC-supported Senator Sherrod Brown (D) will face GOP state treasurer Josh Mandel. This is a race between opposites. Brown is strong on JAC's issues, a vocal supporter of President Obama, labor, education and environment. Mandel has an excellent position paper on Israel but is one hundred percent anti-choice and solidly aligned with the GOP Right on social issues.

OH 16 -- Rep. Betty Sutton (D) will face GOP Rep. Jim Renacci in one of the incumbent vs. incumbent races resulting from redistricting. Sutton's district was eliminated when Ohio lost two congressional seats. JAC has supported Sutton during her three terms in the House and she has been excellent on JAC's issues. Renacci is a freshman who has voted along party lines.

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twelve percent of community hospitals and treat one in six Americans. They also train many new doctors. (*The New Republic* 3/15/12) Even though these hospitals receive federal funding, tax breaks and public insurance dollars, they still want to be exempt from the Affordable Care Act and *Roe v. Wade*. These hospitals will not perform abortions, tubal ligations, or provide training for doctors in these procedures. In many rural towns, the Catholic hospital is the only hospital. There are many documented cases where women in the midst of miscarriages were

denied treatment because of these rules. Although these hospitals provide many essential needs for patients, rich and poor, their practices on women's reproductive health are worrisome.

On the presidential level this week, GOP frontrunner Mitt Romney promised to cut off federal funding for Planned Parenthood if elected president. Romney says people should vote "for the other guy" if they want "free stuff" like female contraception. He doesn't have an answer for where the millions of women who use

Planned Parenthood for breast cancer screenings and vaccines should go if the women's health provider shuts down. Romney says the women can go wherever they'd like because it's a free society but that the government shouldn't send tax dollars to Planned Parenthood. (*AP* 3/19/12)

JAC is closely watching these bills and continues the fight to elect those that respect a woman's right to choose, the right to make her own medical decisions and the privacy and confidentiality of the doctor/patient relationship.

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The administration believes diplomacy and sanctions must be given time to work and that it would take Iran about a year to develop and build its first nuclear weapon if it chose to do so. That said, in his speech at the AIPAC conference the day before, the President reaffirmed that the military option remains on the table. "Iran's leaders should understand that I do not have a policy of containment; I have a policy to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon....I will not hesitate to use force when it is necessary to defend the United States and its interests."

Israel and the U.S. agree on stopping Iran from building nuclear weapons, but the two countries have a different perspective on timetables. The U.S. can afford a longer time to allow sanctions to work. Israel's capability for a unilateral surgical intervention is more limited; it would have to occur in a matter of months or not at all. "When it comes to Israel's security, Israel has the right, the sovereign right, to make its own decisions," Netanyahu told Obama in a brief session with reporters present. "I believe that's why you appreciate, Mr. President, that Israel

must reserve the right to defend itself."

It is unclear whether Iran is secretly enriching uranium at a hidden facility. Monitoring continues by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog. Jeffrey Lewis, a nonproliferation expert at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, says, "If they kick the inspectors out, then I think you have no confidence and that's got to be a red line." Israel may not feel it can wait until that red line is crossed.