

# JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

May 25, 2010

## On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

The nomination of Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court ended the suspense over who President Obama would appoint to fill the vacancy. As her

Senate Judiciary committee hearing approaches this summer, much has been written about Kagan, her history and her qualifications. As a graduate of Princeton and Harvard Law School, clerk for Judge Abner Mikva and Justice Thurgood Marshall, and Dean of Harvard Law School, her intelligence and qualifications are stellar.

Within the Jewish community, there is quiet pride that one of our own has been nominated to serve on the Supreme Court. Not everyone agrees. In a particularly ugly reaction to Kagan's nomination, MSNBC commentator Pat Buchanan complained about Jewish representation on the Court. "If Kagan is confirmed," he warned, "Jews, who represent less than 2 percent of the U.S. population, will have 33 percent of the Supreme Court seats."

For the last decade, organizations on the right have used the message of judicial activism to stir up their base. After witnessing the recent opinions of the Roberts Court in *Citizens v. Federal Election Commission* and *Salazar v. Buono*, it is apparent that activism is in the mind of the beholder. Both of these rulings challenge established precedent and reflect the rightward drift of the Court.

**Join us for a fly-in to Washington June 23rd and meet with senators on the Judiciary Committee the week before hearings begin. This is your opportunity to ask questions and make your opinions known.**

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## Israel

Last week proximity talks began between Israelis and Palestinians, with US Envoy George Mitchell and his team going back and forth between the parties. Borders, peace, refugees and Jerusalem are all being discussed.

President Obama requested an additional \$205 million in assistance for Israel over and above the \$3 billion in the defense bill for Israel. Obama's request for the funding of the "Iron Dome" passed in the House by an overwhelming vote of 410-4. The Iron Dome will provide security for Israel in its short range missile defense system. Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) said the request and quick approval show that "the President and Congress are actively and unshakably committed to Israel's security."

Israel was invited to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This unanimous invitation by 31 member nations recognizes Israel's achievements, economic strength and ability to contribute to the organization and the world economy. The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that membership in the OECD will lead to economic advances and enhance Israel's image. It will also improve the functioning of various sectors in Israel's economy, including the environment, education and employment.

For the first time in history, the Jewish members of both houses of Congress were invited to the White House as a group to discuss US-Israel relations. Everything was on the table for discussion. The meeting was called to reiterate the Obama Administration's strong commitment to Israel's well being and security and to alleviate some of the concern that is being publicly voiced in sectors of the American Jewish community.

**The propaganda campaign to delegitimize Israel shows no signs of letting up. Please let us know if you receive offensive emails or videos. We need to know what is out there.**

## United States

### CHOICE

JACPAC is a national organization that supports women's reproductive rights. We believe that abortion should be safe and legal and that the decision made should be between a woman and her doctor. These basic principles are being tested by state legislators. Instead of trying to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the law of the land since 1973, the states are putting up barriers and restrictions to harass women and take away their constitutional rights.

Across the country, states are making laws mandating ultrasounds, lectures, waiting periods and time constraints. The rallying cry these days is less government, yet abortion rights are being subjected to increased government interference. Many of these laws are made to "protect" a woman from making a poor choice. Of course we know that women are capable of making this important decision in consultation with their doctors, without government intrusion in the process. But the idea is to "educate" and shame women, to stop them from having abortions.

Kelli Conlin, head of NARAL Pro-Choice New York has said "anti-choice forces are mobilizing in every single state to limit a woman's access to abortion in more insidious ways than we can imagine." As the political agenda of the right wing inserts itself into the health care debate, women are the targets. One of the arguments against the health care reform bill was the mandates. The hypocrisy in relation to abortion is evident in the mandated ultrasounds in bills on the desks of governors in up to 20 states, including Florida, Ohio, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana. These ultrasound laws would require that those in their first trimester seeking abortions would have to undergo a vaginal ultrasound and hear a description of the embryo. As appalling as it sounds for unnecessary and invasive medical procedures to be determined by legislators, the

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# Research & Races

## Election Results

**Hawaii special** -- Republican Charles Djou was elected to fill the seat vacated by 10-term Dem. Rep. Neil Abercrombie. Abercrombie is running for governor. Djou's win came as no surprise. The primary was a "winner-takes-all" special and the two Democratic candidates - former Rep. Ed Case and st. Senate President Colleen Hanabusa fought for months and split the party's base. Djou will face voters again in November.

**Pennsylvania special** -- Predictions of the death of the Democratic party have proven premature. In PA-12, where conservative Democrat John Murtha was the Congressman for 35 years before he died, Democrat Mark Critz won the May 18 special election. Critz had been a top-level aide to Murtha, his Director of Economic Development. Pundits had all predicted Democrats could not hold onto this seat.

**Arkansas Senate primary** -- Sen. Blanche Lincoln is in the middle of a perilous 2010 campaign, trailing Republican foes in the polls and challenged by Arkansas Lt. Gov. Bill Halter (D). They face off in a June 8

Democratic runoff, following the May 18th primary that Lincoln won by only two percentage points -- less than the 50% win needed to avoid a run-off. Lincoln is being hit from the right for supporting the health care reform bill and from the left for opposing the public option. Who survives the run-off is anyone's guess. JAC supported Sen. Lincoln when she was a House member and in her two previous races for the Senate and will continue to do so.

**Kentucky Senate primary** -- Reflecting the anti-establishment political trend and the power of the Tea Party, Republican Rand Paul defeated Trey Grayson, the hand-picked candidate of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY). Candidate Paul is following in the ideological and career footsteps of his father, libertarian-in-chief of the House, Texas Congressman Ron Paul. Both are doctors-turned-politicians. On the Dem side, JAC may have a candidate in Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway, pending receipt of position papers on our 3 issues. This is an uphill race for a Dem, but Paul's extremism could be too much for Kentucky. It is too much for JAC.

**Ohio Senate Primary** -- Dem. Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher defeated Sec. of State Jennifer Brunner and will face former Rep. and OMB director Rob Portman for the open seat now held by GOP Sen. George Voinovich. The party will spend whatever is necessary to keep this seat on its side of the aisle. Fisher is a good candidate and strong on JAC's issues. This will be a tough race to the end.

**Pennsylvania Senate primary** -- Five-term Senator Arlen Specter lost to Rep. Joe Sestak. A Sestak win in November is now a JAC priority. When Specter switched parties from Republican to Democrat, to avoid a potential primary loss to right wing GOP former Rep. Pat Toomey, he lost the votes of registered Republicans who had supported him in many races. Although Specter often drew criticism for his prosecutorial demeanor and take-no-prisoners style, he sought repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act and voted for health care reform and for economic stimulus. He is respected as a smart, independent and dedicated lawmaker who never reaped personal gain from a life devoted to public service.

# Immigration

On April 23, 2010 Gov. Jan Brewer of Arizona signed into law the nation's toughest bill on illegal immigration. Its aim is to identify, prosecute and deport illegal immigrants. JACPAC joined 50 other Jewish organizations in condemning the passage of Arizona's ill-advised legislation, Immigration; Law Enforcement; Safe Neighborhoods Act (SB1070). We have called upon Congress and the Department of Justice to introduce comprehensive immigration reform legislation and to monitor the implementation of the law.

Gov. Brewer passed SB 1070 as her answer to the immigration problem in Arizona. There are 11 million undocumented residents in our country and

solutions must be found to deal with the many issues that arise because of our broken immigration system. However, this law is not the answer. When this law takes effect this summer, police will be required to stop anyone they suspect of being illegal, including anyone who "looks illegal."

Jewish and other religious groups worry about people being stopped based on appearance. The Department of Justice is being asked to monitor racial profiling and civil rights violations that are sure to occur.

President Obama said the law threatened "to undermine basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans,

as well as the trust between police and our communities." Proponents and critics alike call it the broadest and strictest immigration measure in generations. Failure to carry immigration papers would be a crime; police would have broad power to detain anyone suspected of being in the country illegally. Opponents say it invites discrimination and harassment of Hispanics regardless of their citizenship status.

Throughout our history, Jews have often been considered outsiders and we know how it feels to live in fear. In the wake of the suspicion, fear and distrust this law brings about, JACPAC calls upon Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform.

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woman would then need to pay for the ultrasound herself. Those who are writing these laws talk a good game about keeping government off our backs and containing health care costs. Some of these laws grant protection from lawsuits to doctors who with-

hold fetal test results that might affect a woman's decision about whether to carry her pregnancy to term. Imagine, the government forces a woman to get and pay for an ultrasound, but the doctor can withhold from the woman the results of the ultrasound.

Elections matter. As the right wing is getting more radical we must be on the watch at all levels of government. JAC needs your support to continue to educate the community and elect those who trust a woman to make her own constitutionally-protected decisions.