

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

June 24, 2009

On my mind this month...



Barbara Bluhm-Kaul is a Congresswoman from south Florida. A rising star in the Democratic party and mother of three, she discovered a lump in her breast in December of 2007 and has since undergone 7 major surgeries. She kept all this secret for over a year, as she stumped and appeared on TV for Presidential candidates, did her job as a Congresswoman and privately became an expert on the genetically-determined form of breast cancer that befell her.

After learning she was at greater risk for the cancer to spread because of her Ashkenazi Jewish descent, she elected to have a double mastectomy, as well as the removal of her ovaries.

On March 24th, just days after she came out of the cancer closet, she held a press conference to announce legislation for a national campaign to educate the public, particularly young women and their doctors, about the need for a much earlier approach to breast cancer detection. Her legislation, which seeks \$9 million annually, is known as the EARLY (Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young) Act. It would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to begin educational campaigns in high schools and universities, with a particular focus on young African-American and Jewish women, who are at higher genetic risk.

We applaud Rep. Wasserman Schultz for her courage and tenacity and we'll keep you informed about this legislation. She will get all the support she needs from JAC to ensure passage.

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Israel

The scheduled meeting later this week between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Mideast envoy George Mitchell has been postponed. The meeting was to take place in Paris where Netanyahu is visiting. Settlement construction was one of the issues to be discussed. Last week, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman told U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that Israel could not accept the Obama administration's demand to "completely" halt activity in West Bank settlements. "We have no intention of changing the demographic balance in Judea and Samaria...Everywhere people are born, people die, and we cannot accept a vision of stopping completely the settlements. We have to have natural growth." A U.S. State Department spokesperson said that the meeting was delayed to allow Mitchell to meet with Israeli Defense Minister (and former PM) Ehud Barak, who is coming to Washington next week. Barak's political stance is thought to be more in line with U.S. thinking. He seems to be emerging as a mediator between the Israeli and U.S. administrations.

Israel's top leaders are publicly voicing their support for the Iranian demonstrators. PM Netanyahu said last Sunday on Meet the Press, "It's a regime whose real nature has been unmasked, and it's been unmasked by incredible acts of courage by Iran's citizens....They go into the streets and face bullets...There's an expression of a deep desire amid the people of Iran for freedom."

Speaking to a gathering of world Jewish leaders, Israeli President Shimon Peres suggested that the street protests pose a threat to Iran's regime and its pursuit of nuclear weapons. "I don't know what will disappear first -- their enriched uranium or their poor government ...Hopefully, the poor government will disappear." (*Los Angeles Times* 6/24).

Zvi Barel wrote in Ha'aretz, "Sud-denly, there appears to be an Iranian

United States

CHOICE

In the wake of the murder of Dr. George Tiller, the physician-of-last-resort for thousands of women, the U.S. Senate is debating a resolution condemning violence against abortion providers. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) is the lead sponsor, along with Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). The bill says that "acts of violence should never be used to prevent women from receiving reproductive health care." The final three words have brought opposition from anti-abortion senators and a "secret hold" has been put on the resolution preventing it from coming to a vote. Senators Klobuchar, Boxer and Shaheen have said they will not compromise on the wording "condemning violence against women's health care providers and agreeing not to use violence as a means of resolving differences are not objectionable viewpoints."

On June 9, the House unanimously passed a watered down version which condemned the murder of Tiller and included a half-dozen other murders that occurred in places of worship. It did not mention Tiller's profession, the reason he was murdered or the terms "abortion" or "reproductive rights." The Senate version has 43 cosponsors. (*The Minnesota Independent* 6/22/09)

The Arizona Senate voted June 23 to require a 24-hour waiting period for abortions and to increase penalties for performing "partial-birth" abortions. The bill would also give physicians and other medical professionals the right to refuse to participate in an abortion or to prescribe emergency contraception. Minors seeking an abortion would have to receive written, notarized consent from a parent or guardian. Passing further restrictions on abortion has been a priority of Arizona Republican leadership. Former Governor Janet Napolitano vetoed every bill that came across her desk.

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Research & Races

2010 RACES

Senate-Open Seats

Eighteen Democratic and nineteen Republican seats will be decided in 2010. It is always easier to pick up an Open Seat than it is to defeat an incumbent. At this date, Democrats have only one open seat and one potentially open seat. Republicans have five open seats with two more possible retirements. The rundown is as follows:

Delaware - Democrat Ted Kaufman was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Vice President Joe Biden. Kaufman always said he would not seek a full term. Delaware is traditionally a Democratic state, but their sole member of the House, Republican Mike Castle, would give any Democrat a tough race. Castle has not declared his intentions to seek reelection to the House or to run for the Senate. Beau Biden, VP Biden's son and the state Attorney General, is expected to seek the Democratic nomination when he returns from his Iraq deployment.

Florida - GOP Sen. Mel Martinez is retiring. Three Republicans have declared: Gov. Charlie Crist, former state House Speaker Marco Rubio, and former New Hampshire Sen. Bob Smith, now a Florida resident. There are also three declared Democrats: Rep. Kend-

rick Meek, North Miami Mayor Kevin Burns, and former teacher Joe Allen. Rep. Corrine Brown has formed an exploratory committee.

Kansas - GOP Sen. Sam Brownback is retiring. Two GOP Reps. have declared (leaving two open seats in the House) Jerry Moran and Todd Tiahrt. No Democrats have formally announced. Kansas heavily favors the GOP.

Missouri - GOP Sen. Kit Bond is retiring. Secretary of State Robin Carnahan (D) is in the race and has no primary opposition. House Minority Whip Roy Blunt is the sole announced Republican at this date. State Treasurer Sarah Steelman, who was going to challenge Blunt, has withdrawn.

New Hampshire - Republican Sen. Judd Gregg is retiring. Democratic Rep. Paul Hodes has the nomination to himself at this date. There are no announced Republican candidates, although several names are mentioned.

Ohio - GOP Sen. George Voinovich is retiring. The two declared Democratic candidates are Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner and Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher. Rob Portman, former OMB director, former US Trade Representative, and former Congressman, is the only de-

clared Republican candidate; he is not likely to have primary opposition.

There are three more potential Senate retirements.

Illinois - Democratic Sen. Roland Burris, appointed to fill President Barack Obama's unexpired term, has raised little money and is being urged to step down. There is a long list of members of Congress and state officeholders on both sides of the aisle who are waiting for Burris' decision.

Kentucky - GOP Sen. Jim Bunning says he is still running, despite anemic poll numbers and fundraising. National GOP leaders are trying to convince him to retire. Two top-tier Democratic candidates – Lt. Gov and '04 Senate nominee Dan Mongiardo and Attorney General Jack Conway – have already declared. Republicans can't do a good recruiting job until Bunning steps out of the way.

Texas - Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison is running for Governor in 2012. She may, or may not, resign before the 2010 election. If the seat is open, several Republicans are waiting in the wings. Two Democrats have announced - former Comptroller John Sharp and Houston mayor Bill White.

Right Wing Watch

The state of Kentucky passed a law in 2008 mandating that schools develop materials that can be used to teach about the Holocaust. The "Facing History" curriculum, renowned for its excellence and widely used throughout the country, is receiving opposition from religious right groups. The Louisville Courier-Journal reported, "The class begins with a study of individuality and social responsibility, in which students complete activities to assist

them in defining their own role in society. They discuss the historical development of the Holocaust and other instances of collective violence and learn how to be an active, informed participant in society." Superintendent Sheldon Berman called it, "the single best piece of curriculum that I know of because of its impact on students and its level of sophistication."

The Family Foundation of Kentucky,

the state affiliate of James Dobson's Focus on the Family, has charged "that schools are replacing civics education with 'tolerance' and moans that 'questions remain about who gets to define what 'tolerance' is for the students.'" In 1996, Dobson attacked the concept of tolerance and told his radio audience that "tolerance is a kind of desensitization to evil of all varieties... everything has become acceptable to those who are tolerant."

Middle East, continued from page one

people. Not just nuclear technology, extremist ayatollahs, Holocaust-denying Ahmadinejad, and an axis of evil....There is the Iran that once screamed 'Death to America and to Israel' and there is the Iran that now screams 'Down with the dictator!'"

The Obama administration will return an ambassador to Syria. The post has been vacant for four years, and

this move at diplomatic engagement signals Pres. Obama's determination to improve relations with the Arab world. Mideast envoy George Mitchell was in Syria two weeks ago, where he said he had "serious and productive discussions" with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. "We intend to pursue this as vigorously as possible," Mitchell said. An official announcement is expected later this week.(CNN.com 6/24)

Tensions between Washington and Damascus may be thawing, but relations between Israel and Syria are "as cool as ever," reports the *Jerusalem Post* (6/24). President Bashar Assad, speaking at a press conference in Greece on June 23rd, said, "Peace demands an Israeli partner and a commitment to international law, UN resolutions, and the principle of land for peace. An Israeli partner currently does not exist."