

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

July 25, 2007

On my mind this month...



Jackie Abelman-Cohen

Just when you think the underhandedness – if not downright illegal actions – of the White House political office couldn't sink lower, a new report raises allegations that following the Republican loss in November, Karl Rove hosted a meeting at the White House with six U.S. Ambassadors to key European missions and one consul general to explain the "electoral disaster". Also in attendance was Sara Taylor, the political director. According to the Washington Post, she showed a PowerPoint presentation that included a chart highlighting the GOP's top targets among House Democrats for the 2008 election. As any eighth grader knows the Hatch Act prohibits Federal workers from involvement in partisan politics and bars the use of federal resources, including office buildings. In response to a letter from Sen. Biden, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a State Department spokesman argues that the Ambassadors are political appointees. Left unstated is the fact that the seven diplomats contributed more than \$1.6m to Republican causes from 2000-2006 according to the Center for Responsive Politics. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why the list of 36 Democrats was prominently displayed. As you can imagine, many of them are JAC-supported.

It goes without saying, these candidates need our help. Over the course of the next months, JAC will profile House races, both Democrats and Republicans. We have a critical role to play. I hope we can count on your support. Better yet, adopt one (or more) of the candidates and raise funds for them in your community.

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

Former British prime minister Tony Blair arrived in Israel on Monday, July 23, as the international community's Middle East peace envoy. Blair said he had come "to listen, learn and reflect" during his two days of meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. "I think there is a sense of possibility, but whether that sense of possibility can be translated into something, that is something that needs to be worked at and thought about over time." Blair also met with Israeli opposition head Binyamin Netanyahu. Both agreed that the possibility of Iran's achieving nuclear weapons capability was the biggest threat to the Middle East and the world. Blair is to return in early September and hopes to have an office in place in Jerusalem. He plans to spend about one week a month in the area. Israeli President Shimon Peres told Blair that he and Israel would work to help him in his mission. "Your success is our success; your dreams are our dreams...I feel there is a serious window of opportunity to advance peace. I don't know the duration of this opportunity, I am afraid it is not too long." (*Haaretz.com* 7/24/07)

Blair also traveled to Ramallah where he met with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayad. On Monday, Hamas told the London Times, it would be willing to talk to Blair, but not to the Israeli government.

On Sunday, July 22, the New York Times reported that many West Bank Palestinian militants, taken off Israel's wanted list as a gesture to President Abbas, have been handing in weapons and signing pledges to cease violence against Israel. "Everything must come to an end...there are two tracks, the political and the military...Now is the time for the political stage," said Mahdi Maraka, an Aksa Brigades leader from Nablus. The Aksa Brigade, which first appeared in 2000, was one of the driving forces of the second Palestinian Intifada. Associates of one of the Brigades chief



United States

CHOICE

Louisiana became the first state to outlaw "partial-birth" abortion since the Supreme Court upheld the federal ban earlier this year. The new law allows the procedure only when the mother's life is at risk. Otherwise, doctors would face fines of between \$1,000 and \$10,000 and jail terms of between one and 10 years. In Kansas, the House is drafting legislation that would limit abortions after 21 weeks, except when the mother's life is at risk. The state's current law allows late-term abortions only if two physicians agree the mother's life is at risk or that continuation of the pregnancy would cause her "substantial and irreversible harm to a major physical or mental function." Arlen Siegfried, chairman of the House committee drafting the law, says the big question is will it stand up to a constitutional test and will it have to include mental health after the 21st week. (*Topeka Capital-Journal* 7/20/07)

A Missouri law that goes into effect next month requires any medical clinic performing more than five first-trimester abortions a month, or any abortions later in pregnancy to be licensed as an "ambulatory surgical center." According to Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, the state's existing regulations for outpatient surgery centers even set such things as the number of parking spaces and the width of hallways. The cost of renovating the Columbia, Missouri clinic to meet the specifications could be as much as \$2 million. The alternative is to stop offering abortion services in Columbia, leaving a St. Louis clinic as Planned Parenthood's only abortion site in the state. (*Columbia Missourian*, 7/23/07) A ballot initiative that would outlaw all abortions in Colorado by changing the state constitution to define life as beginning at conception has been submitted by the newly formed El Paso County political committee. The group seeks to add a clause to state law that the term "person" shall include "any human being from the moment of fertilization." Similar efforts are under way in Mississippi and Georgia. (*DenverGazette.com* 7/16/07)

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Research & Races

Senate 2008

Last month this section covered 2008 Senate races featuring JAC supported incumbents in Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana and Maine. The list continues - alphabetical by state - the remainder next month.

Massachusetts - John Kerry (D) chairs the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee and sits on the Commerce, Finance and Foreign Relations Committees as well. When he announced earlier in the year that he would not seek the Presidential nomination for 2008, he also announced that he would seek a 5th term in the Senate. Kerry has never accepted PAC contributions but many JAC members have supported the Senator. His voting record on JAC's issues is perfect.

Michigan - Carl Levin (D) chairs the vitally important Armed Services Committee. His almost thirty years of experience have been good preparation for this leadership position. Levin

is the senior Jewish Senator and has been a friend of JAC's since the PAC's inception. His door is always open to JAC members, and Levin has spoken to the entire JAC delegation at several of our Washington conferences.

Montana - Max Baucus (D) is running for his 6th term. He was just 30 years old when first elected in 1972. Baucus chairs the Finance Committee. He has been a consistently positive vote on JAC's issues, not always easy votes when you come from Montana. And, Baucus continues to be a top tier Republican target.

New Jersey - Frank Lautenberg (D) sits on both the Appropriations

and Budget Committees. Lautenberg retired at the end of his 3rd term but returned to run in 2000 after the Democratic candidate was forced to withdraw. Although he will be 84 in 2008, he shows no signs of slowing down.

Rhode Island - Jack Reed (D) is completing his second term in the Senate after serving three terms in the House. He sits on the Appropriations and Armed Services Committees. Reed is a graduate of West Point and often appears on news programs as a leading voice on military matters. JAC supported Reed during his tenure in the House and in both of his Senate races.

Right Wing Watch

Rev. Rick Scarborough, the founder of Vision America, has begun his "70 weeks to Save America" tour of political rallies at churches, with the goal of signing Values Voters, 10,000 key leaders, 5,000 Patriot Pastors and 5,000 women to "vote their Christian values on election day." At the kickoff event in Lufkin, Texas, on July 12, the speakers included Alan Keyes, former senate and presidential candidate who told the crowd, "there can

be no separation of church and state," and Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-TX) who was praised for opposing hate crimes protections for gays. Although the hate crimes bill applies only to violent crimes, Gohmert claimed, "they will come after your sermon notes and your congregation and accuse you of hate speech crimes, just for quoting your Bible in church." Scarborough then warned that "terrorist attacks were a result of abortion and other policies

in America...we've allowed terror to strike in the wombs of mothers...God would reverse the terror if we would reverse our sin." Vision America has been struggling since the 2006 elections when Democrats took control of Congress. "These things took place because good people stayed home and didn't vote...I am not content to sit back and watch the nation be destroyed." (PFAW *Right Wing Watch*)

Separation of Religion and State

The Senate will be voting on the Higher Education Amendments of 2007 in the next few weeks. In late June, an amendment passed out of committee with language that could allow the U.S. Department of Education to force accrediting agencies to grant accreditation to universities with histories of religiously based discrimination, such as Bob Jones University. The amendment states that educational accrediting groups must "consistently apply and enforce standards that respect the stated mission of the institution of higher edu-

cation, including religious missions." Let your Senators know that you oppose accrediting any higher education institutions that practice religiously based discrimination. Judge Bethany Hicks of Maricopa County Superior Court(Phoenix, AZ) has upheld two new state voucher programs designed to provide money to send foster and disabled children to private schools. Opponents of the programs argue that funds are being diverted from the state's public school system and that public funding is being

used for private and religious education. Judge Hicks ruled that "the grants to parents aren't appropriations of state money for religious worship or instruction and don't support any religious organization." The voucher program for disabled students has taken effect. The program for foster children will start with the 2007-08 school year. Governor Janet Napolitano (D) opposes vouchers but accepted the programs as part of a 2006 budget compromise with the Republican led legislature.

Israel, continued

architects, the jailed but still very influential Marwan Barghouti, say "even they support the amnesty." The gunmen removed from the wanted list pledged to give up all anti-Israeli activity, hand in their weapons and remain inside local Palestinian Author-

ity Intelligence or Preventive Security compound for a week and in their home cities for the next three months. If Israel is satisfied, the former fighters will be able to leave their fugitive lives behind and become salaried employees of the official security services from

which most of them originally sprung. The deal has proved so popular that there is already talk of another list and Aksa militants seem ready to line up for it. Naturally, there is skepticism on both sides.