

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

July 25, 2008

On my mind this month...



Hon. Amy N. Dean

I read with great interest that our soon-to-be-out-of-office president (Baruch Hashem) has opined that “Wall Street is drunk.” Incredible. Not just because of President Bush’s own colorful history, but also because of the horrific inroads into our constitutionally guaranteed freedoms that have occurred since this fellow and his minions took office. The only excuse one can look to is inebriation.

Dare I review? Search and seizure protections are out the door, the rights of the criminally accused are undermined and now his administration wants to designate birth control as abortion and thus prohibit it from federally funded programs. So let’s be clear. No sex education, no contraception and no abortion for those who view it as a choice. Is it any wonder that teen pregnancies and births are on the rise? If you do not believe in providing a choice, how can you object to education and prevention? Frankly it boggles the mind and leaves me wanting to get drunk.

Senator Hillary Clinton has issued a call to “arms” to all of us to learn about this effort and work to stop this insanity. I encourage each of you to heed her warning and get involved by contacting the elected official of your choice.

Speak out on this subject, make others aware of this last ditch effort to deny citizens of their rights. Moreover, pray Bush really means it when he says he is “out of the politics business.”

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Israel

Two hundred and forty six members of the House of Representatives have cosponsored H.Con.Res. 362, which calls on the Administration “to focus on the urgency of the Iranian nuclear threat and to impose tougher sanctions on Tehran.” The resolution urges the president to sanction Iran’s Central Bank and private banks and energy companies investing in Iran. It also calls on the U.S. “to lead an international effort to ban the sale of refined petroleum products to Iran” to increase pressure on Tehran to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Senator Barack Obama traveled to Israel on July 22nd and, as he has on many occasions, affirmed his support for a strong US-Israel relationship. Yediot Aharonot, the country’s largest-circulation daily newspaper, likened the senator’s arrival to that of a “rock star.” Prior to his visit, Israelis had some doubts about Obama. After chats and photo-ops with political leaders, an hour-long trip to meet Palestinian leaders in Ramallah, and visits to Yad Vashem and the Western Wall, he appeared to have satisfied the skeptics.

“Everyone in Sderot thinks he was a charming young man,” Cheryl Ben-David, a Sderot mother whose house has been hit twice by rockets, told the Forward. “People were impressed, especially those he visited whose house was hit. I think it was partly sincere and partly political interest.”

Israeli President Shimon Peres, accompanying Obama to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, told him: “The world and so are we with you. God bless you.”

In the last poll before the visit, only 27% of respondents said they would like to see Obama become president, with John McCain preferred by 36%. But in a poll taken on the afternoon of the visit, only 28% favored McCain for president, while 37% said they preferred Obama.

Israel, continued on page 2

United States

CHOICE

A Bush administration proposal, drafted by the Department of Health and Human Services, began circulating around Capitol Hill this week. It would require all recipients of aid under federal health programs not to deny employment to medical personnel who oppose forms of contraception including birth control pills. Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) argued that these proposals “would change the definition of abortion and limit women’s access to contraception.” “The more I learn about these rules by the Bush administration, the more appalled I am and the more determined I am to stop them...This is a gratuitous, unnecessary insult to the women of the United States of America. These rules pose a dire threat to women’s health, to health-care providers, and to uninsured and low-income Americans seeking care.”

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY), speaking alongside Sen. Clinton, said the proposal goes way beyond current law. The draft proposal defines abortion “as any of the various procedures that result in the termination of the life of a human being in utero between conception and natural birth whether before or after implantation...Last time I checked, by medical definition, a pregnancy does not begin until a fertilized egg implants in a woman’s uterine wall...” Rep. Lowey is working with her colleagues in the House of Representatives to send a letter to HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt “demanding that he stop this proposal.” As of July 18th, 90 House members had signed on to the letter. Sens. Clinton and Patty Murray (D-WA) wrote to Secretary Leavitt earlier in the week. (ABC News, 7/18/08)

Action Alert: Contact your representative and senators and express opposition to requiring federally funded health programs not to deny employment to medical personnel who oppose forms of contraception including birth control pills.
Capitol Switchboard: 202 224-3121.

Choice, continued on page 2

Research & Races

As we indicated last month, there are a great number of competitive races this cycle. JAC's priority is to support endangered incumbents, first in the Senate and then in the House. We urge you to contribute, through JAC, to the candidates featured in this section. You can do this on line at www.jacpac.org, call us at 847-433-5999 with your credit card information, or mail your checks to JAC, P.O. Box 105, Highland Park, IL 60035. Again we want to stress that your contributions send a message when they are bundled with other JAC members. When you send them in response to a mail or phone solicitation, the candidate does not know what issues concern you.

SENATE ENDORSEMENTS

Alaska -- Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich is challenging GOP Sen. Ted Stevens. Stevens is 85 years old and has held this seat for 42 years, consistently bringing back "the bacon" to his home turf. But, this cycle Stevens is being questioned about misuse of campaign funds while the strength of Alaska's Republican Party is declining. Begich was born in Anchorage, is the son of Alaska's third congressman, and considered a highly successful mayor. **Alaskans for Begich.**

North Carolina -- St. Sen. Kay Hagan is challenging GOP Sen. Elizabeth Dole. There is no question that this is an uphill battle for Hagan, but this is a good time to challenge an incumbent with close ties to the Bush administration. North Carolina Governor Mike Easley calls Kay "one of the smartest, hardest working, most effective Senators we have in Raleigh." Hagan has been in the state senate for 10 years and has served as co-chair of the Budget Committee during her last three terms. **Kay Hagan for US Senate**

HOUSE ENDORSEMENTS

Arizona (03) -- Attorney Bob Lord is trying to unseat 7 term GOP Rep. John Shadegg. Although this is a tough race, Shadegg did not help himself when he announced his retirement and then changed his mind after pressure from special interest groups. **Lord 2008**

Maine (01) -- Former Common Cause President Chellie Pingree is running for this open seat, currently held by Rep. Tom Allen, who is running for the Senate. Demographics strongly favor Pingree. **Pingree for Congress**

SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE

The Alliance Defense Fund, a legal organization founded by James Dobson and other prominent conservatives in the mid 1990s has recruited 50 pastors to deliver sermons in September that will include direct endorsements of political candidates. ADF argues that religious leaders speaking from the pulpit should be given special speech protections. "The only thing that should be dictating to pastors what they can and cannot say is the Bible, not the Internal Revenue Service," said

Gus Booth, a Minnesota pastor who has endorsed Senator John McCain from his pulpit. The new ADF initiative comes in response to the IRS's increased efforts to seek out non-for-profit violators. The IRS issued a set of detailed guidelines in 2004, including one that precludes all clergy from endorsing from the pulpit. In the country's early years, it was neither unusual nor illegal for clergy to back political candidates from the pulpit. That changed as a result of federal legisla-

tion passed in 1954 and updated in 2004. Erik Stanley, ADF's senior legal counsel, said it would argue that "the tax-exempt status of religious groups is a right, not just a privilege and that religious leaders enjoy a number of special protections under the First Amendment. Marc Stern, general counsel of the American Jewish Congress said "there are violations all over the place, and I don't think any side has a monopoly on virtue here...the legal arguments offered by ADF are beyond weak." (Forward.com)

Israel, continued from page one

As his star rose in Israel, Obama lost popularity among Palestinians and much of the Arab world. Palestinians had cheered Obama when he first emerged as a candidate, but now, just three months later, Hamas leaders greeted Obama's Israel visit with undisguised vitriol. "Hamas considers the remarks of the Democratic candidate today to be part of the American policy of bias towards Israel and giving legitimacy to Israeli crimes against our people," Hamas official Fawzi Barhoum told Western reporters in Gaza shortly after Obama appeared in nearby Sderot. Even in Ramallah,

where Obama met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian shopkeepers, students and housewives voiced similar sentiments.

Not every Israeli was won over. The chairman of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea and Samaria, Dani Dayan, told the Forward: "He's wrong in his backing for a two-state solution, and though a candidate who promises change, has fallen into the same trap as President Bush..."

Centrist journalist Yair Lapid warned in a Yediot column that Obama's warm

words masked a lack of passion for the region. "In the coming days, he will prove to us in many ways how much he likes us," Lapid wrote. "Yet after that he will go and take care of the things that really matter to him" like the Iraq War, gas prices, and the mortgage crisis.

Whatever Israelis thought of Obama after seeing him up close, most agreed on one point: America's choice of president is a critical matter for Israel. "whereas in the Arab world there is a sense it will make far less difference who becomes president."

Choice, continued from page one

A proposed Montana state constitutional amendment to ban abortion by defining a fertilized egg as a "person" failed to gain enough support to qualify for the November ballot. Con-

stitutional Initiative 100 would have changed the definition of a "person" and bestowed on a fertilized human egg all the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Supporters needed 44,000

signatures from Montana voters to qualify for the ballot. Only 21,280 were obtained.