

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

Aug 25, 2008

On my mind this month...



Hon. Amy N. Dean

This is my final column for the *Newsbreak* as my term as JAC president is at an end. I write you this from Denver, where

I feel the culmination of our continued vigilance and activism. Here, the candidates who have always supported our issues will be nominated and selected to go forward into the election season.

I recognize that JAC is bipartisan and can support Republicans or Democrats who share our agenda. In the presidential contest, the choice has been clear. Senator McCain will continue his rapid shift to the right in an effort to gain the support from those who would not have chosen him previously due to his seeming "maverick" ways. We can only look to Senators Obama and Biden for the total commitment we seek for our combined agenda of pro-Israel, pro-reproductive rights and pro-separation of religion and state.

I know some are disappointed with the fact that their candidate will not be the nominee. It is hard, particularly in light of the media's behavior during the primary season. However, at the end of the day, we must focus on which candidate is most willing and best equipped to support our issues and lead us forward. That can only be the Democratic ticket and I ask you to join me in your wholehearted support this election of these candidates.

Finally, it has been a pleasure to serve as your President and I know the organization will only go from strength to strength.

✧ Israel

According to the Jerusalem Post and Israel's Channel 10, the United States has turned down a request by Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak to purchase Boeing 767 aircraft, which can be used for mid-air refueling, out of concern that it might be seen as encouraging an Israeli attack on Iran. "The US's position at the present time is that they don't see an action against Iran as the right thing to do," Barak said. "Our position, and formally their position as well, is that no options should be taken off the table...When we say that, we mean it." A US State Department spokesperson would not comment saying that the discussions were confidential. He did say, "that the US is committed to Israel's security," and "the US would defend Israel from any attack from Iran." (*Jerusalem Post* online 8/20/08) As a compromise, Washington offered 1) to bolster Israel's defenses against ballistic missiles by stationing an advanced radar system in Israel and linking Israel directly into "America's early warning satellite network, 2) increased funding for Israel's Arrow missile defense system and 3) to sell nine Super Hercules long-range transport aircraft for \$2 billion.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has told Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas "that Israel will not allow the return of any Palestinian refugees as part of a future statehood deal." Nabil Abu Rdainah, an aide to Abbas said that Olmert's stance was unacceptable. He said that a final settlement must provide for a Palestinian state in all of Gaza and the West Bank, include East Jerusalem and "a just solution for the issue of refugees." Olmert has long rejected the Palestinian "right of return for refugees and their descendants." Approximately 700,000 people, half the Arab population of Palestine in May 1948, fled when the state of Israel was created. That population now numbers 4.5 million. Letting them and their families live in Israel now would undermine the composition of Israel as a Jewish state. (*Reuters* 8/14/08)

🇺🇸 United States

CHOICE

South Dakota voters in 2006 rejected a ballot measure to ban all abortions, except to save the woman's life. The ban failed 56% to 44%. A new measure, which bans abortions with exceptions for rape, incest and a threat to a woman's life and health will appear on this November's ballot. Supporters hope the added exceptions will attract more voters. Abortion rights groups, including Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America say "the exceptions are narrowly written and would be essentially meaningless." Leslee Unruh of Sioux Falls who is heading the campaign supporting the ban, said "the ballot measure is intended to prompt a court challenge aimed at getting the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion." Both sides have launched national campaigns to raise money across the country and utilize the media to deliver their message.

Operation Save America, an offshoot of Operation Rescue, "takes up the cause of preborn children in the name of Jesus Christ...the Bible is our foundation; the Cross of Christ is our strategy." "There are no cheap political solutions to the holocaust presently ravaging our nation. Like slavery before it, abortion is preeminently a Gospel issue. The Cross of Christ is the only solution." Operation Save America planned week-long demonstrations last month in Atlanta to celebrate similar demonstrations held 20 years ago by Operation Rescue. This time, the protests fell flat. About 120 protesters showed up and didn't disturb any downtown activities. Georgians may feel that they are making their anti-abortion views known without rallies. The state's political leadership has shifted to the right. The governor, lieutenant governor and

Research & Races

JAC cannot stress enough the importance of Congressional races, both in the Senate and the House. Only by electing members who share JAC's values can we ensure continued United States support for Israel, reproductive choice for women and the separation of religion and state. Without the support of Congress, a new administration will not be able to further its agenda. Please renew your membership as soon as it becomes due or make an additional contribution to be allocated to candidates. You can donate online at www.jacpac.org, by phone 847-433-5999 or by mailing a check to JAC, P.O. Box 105, Highland Park, IL. 60035.

2008 SENATE UPDATE

Alaska -- Since last month, GOP Sen. Ted Stevens has been indicted and faces trial in Washington. Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich gets high marks as a popular top tier candidate. Stevens seniority and clout have kept him in office for almost 50 years, but in the political atmosphere of 2008 his tenure could be over. JAC is in this race.

Colorado -- JAC contributed to Mark Udall's race for this open seat early in the campaign. Colorado has been moving toward the Democratic column, electing a Democratic Senator in 2004 and a Democratic Governor in 2006. But the Republican Party is still strong and Udall's opponent, former Rep. Bob Schaffer, has narrowed the gap. This will be a "toss-up" all the way to November.

Minnesota -- Al Franken, radio host, Saturday Night Live star and author, is challenging GOP Sen. Norm Cole-

man. Coleman is close to the Bush Administration, has a good record on Israel, but is anti-choice and weak on the separation of religion and state. Franken has proven himself to be a serious candidate concerned about JAC's three issues with favorable positions on choice and separation in addition to Israel. JAC is in this race.

Virginia -- Former Gov. Mark Warner is the keynote speaker at the Democratic convention. He toyed with running for President this cycle, but opted to run for Virginia's open seat. He will face another former governor and presidential candidate, Jim Gilmore. Warner's popularity gives him the lead in the polls, but the outcome can't be taken for granted. JAC supports Warner.

HOUSE RACES TO WATCH

These races are on JAC's radar screen. Two months ago, these candidates did not look viable, but that has changed and seats that seemed safe for the

incumbents are looking vulnerable.

Alabama 03 -- Attorney Josh Segall is giving GOP Rep. Mike Rogers nightmares. Segall is running a strong campaign and doesn't appear to be hurt by his pro-choice position.

Colorado 04 -- Betsy Markey, an aide to Colorado's Sen. Ken Salazar, is challenging GOP Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, one of the most conservative women in the House and the primary sponsor of a Constitutional amendment to ban same sex marriage. Polls show this as a "toss-up."

New Jersey 05 -- Dennis Shulman is an unusual candidate. He is a rabbi and he is blind. But his disability has not stopped him in the past and is not holding him back now. His strong campaign against GOP Rep. Scott Garrett, the most conservative member of the New Jersey delegation, could make this once-longshot takeover bid a real possibility.

SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE

In a unanimous decision on July 23, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled "that the state of Colorado could not bar state scholarship funds from going to educational institutions that are steeped in a religious point of view." The case focused on the state's refusal to provide a scholarship for a student attending Colorado Christian University, a small, evangelical college outside Denver. The refusal was based on a state law "barring funding to pervasively sectarian institutions." Colorado does fund religious schools "that it determines are not completely permeated by religion." Federal judge Michael McConnell (one of the names previously considered for a Supreme Court vacancy), wrote that the program "expressly discriminates among religions without constitutional justification." Several Jewish groups, including the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League all signed on to a brief that supported the state of Colorado. In response to McConnell's decision, Doug Laycock, a law professor at the University of Michigan said,

"I think we do better to treat all institutions equally in these matters...Funding everybody or unding nobody are two good alternatives. Funding some people and not others produces incentives to change your religious behavior." Yeshiva University made changes in its curriculum several years ago - including the elimination of mandatory synagogue attendance - to ensure that it could receive state funds. The state of Colorado did not appeal the Tenth Circuit's decision to the Supreme Court, but legal experts agreed that "it will only be a matter of time before the matter of pervasively sectarian institutions appears before the court." (*Forward* 8/14/08)

The Arizona Court of Appeals has struck down the state's school voucher law. The court held the law violated the state constitution's ban on using public money to aid private schools. The state's teachers union and local school boards filed the suit last year and appealed after losing in county court. "Vouchers divert funds from an already strapped system and channel them to private organiza-

tions that, unlike public schools, are not required to be accountable for how the money is spent," said Panfilo Contreras, executive director of the Arizona School Boards Association. (*Church & State*, July/August 2008)

FYI

Ballots in several states in November will include constitutional amendments on divisive social issues - banning same-sex marriage in Arizona, California and Florida and limitations on abortion in California, Colorado and South Dakota (as outlined in the Choice section above). A proposal banning affirmative action is on the ballot in Colorado and Arizona and Nebraska may do the same. Similar measures have already passed in California, Michigan and Washington. Massachusetts will vote on abolishing the income tax. Washington state will vote on legalizing assisted suicide for people who are terminally ill. Michigan will vote on ending a 30 year ban on stem cell research that destroys human embryos.