

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

Aug 27, 2009

On my mind this month...



Barbara Bluhm-Kaul

The Senate and the country lost one of the most influential lawmakers of our time, Senator Ted Kennedy. He was the Senate's most

outspoken and effective proponent of progressive causes and bills. Master of the legislative process, he won the respect of colleagues on both sides of the aisle. He was perfect on JAC's issues. Kennedy and his Senate staff wrote some 2,500 bills, of which more than 300 were enacted into law. He co-sponsored another 550 bills that became law since 1973, among them the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, Mental Health Parity Act and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, (SCHIP). Today's challenges to health care reform might have been neutralized had he been present to shape the debate.



A friend to JAC since its inception, Kennedy was a steadfast pro-Israel presence in the Senate. Israeli leaders, left and right, from Shimon Peres to Avigdor Lieberman, issued statements of condolence. Peres said he was "a great friend to Israel and the Jewish people. A protector of human rights... who stood by Israel's side in its most trying times..."

What better way to honor Senator Kennedy's memory than to follow the example he set in his Senate career. If an Irish-Catholic son of privilege can embody *Tikkun Olam*, can we do any less?

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Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Middle East envoy George Mitchell failed to reach an agreement on the issue of West Bank settlements during a meeting Wednesday in London. A joint statement put out by the U.S. and Israel said the meeting was "good," that there had been "progress," and that representatives from Netanyahu's office would travel to Washington next week for further meetings with Mitchell's staff. On Tuesday, Netanyahu told British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, "that the settlements were a territorial issue that could be resolved in negotiations with the Palestinians, but the Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as the national home of the Jewish people was the core problem preventing a peace agreement." Netanyahu pointed out that the settlement issue was not the cause of the Israeli-Arab dispute. The conflict long predated the settlements. (*Jerusalem Post* 9/26/09)

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has said he is open to meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu at the United Nations next month. Officials stress that Abbas is not dropping conditions of a settlement freeze and that the meeting would "just be a chance to talk, not amount to negotiations." (*ynetnews.com* 8/26/09)

Abbas and Netanyahu have not met since March. At the same time, and as reported in the *New York Times* (8/26/09), Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that the PA "intends to bypass failing peace talks and establish its own de facto state within two years... We have decided to be proactive, to expedite the end of the occupation by working very hard to build positive facts on the ground, consistent with having our state emerge as a fact that cannot be ignored. This is our agenda and we want to pursue it doggedly." Fayyad is American educated and a former official of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. He is respected in the West, but has a mar-

(Israel, continued on page two)

United States

CHOICE

In October, 2008, Oklahoma passed a law requiring women seeking an abortion to undergo an ultrasound and listen to a doctor describing the image. Last week, on August 19, Oklahoma County District Judge Vicki Robertson determined, on a technicality, that the law violated the state constitutional requirement of dealing with more than one subject. Judge Robertson did not rule on whether the law, which rolled together five separate anti-abortion measures, violated constitutional protections of privacy and freedom of speech. The law would allow the woman "to avert her eyes" but would require the doctor or technician to talk her through the procedure, "describing the heart, limbs and internal organs." The law has never gone into effect because of the legal challenge. The Oklahoma Attorney General's office has said it will file an appeal with the State Supreme Court, arguing that "the law does not violate the single-subject rule, because all its parts are germane to abortion." Several other states have passed laws requiring women to undergo an ultrasound before an abortion. (*NYTimes*, 9/20/09)

Reps. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Tim Ryan (D-OH) have introduced the Preventing Unintended Pregnancies, Reducing the Need for Abortion and Supporting Parents Act. Rosa DeLauro has always been a strong and vocal proponent of a woman's right to choose. Congressman Ryan has been a passionate opponent. Rep. DeLauro told *U.S. News and World Report* that our legislation hopes to "break the stalemate that has impeded forward progress on reducing the abortion rate in this country... our bill aims to broker a detente and turndown the volume on the 'culture wars' that have plagued our attempts to prevent unplanned pregnancies in the past... With this bill, we affirm both our core principles as Democrats and our commitment to promoting life. And I am happy to say that the new administration, while remaining

(Choice, continued on page two)

Research & Races

2010 SENATE

Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), who died of brain cancer on Aug 25th, had asked the Massachusetts legislature and Gov. Deval Patrick to change the succession law so that his Senate seat would not remain vacant in the event of his resignation or death. The state law, changed when Senator John Kerry ran for President, calls for a special election to fill a vacant seat. Kennedy asked for an interim appointment until a special election can be held. Kennedy's term was to expire in 2012.

California - Former Hewlett Packard CEO and McCain economic adviser Carly Fiorina has formed an exploratory committee to consider challenging JAC-supported Senator **Barbara Boxer**. The last time a Republican represented California in the Senate was in 1992. Boxer took office in 1993.

Illinois - Polls show GOP Rep. **Mark Kirk** leading both Chicago Urban League President Cheryl Jackson (D) and state Treasurer Alexi Giannoulis (D). Businessman Chris Kennedy (D)

announced he would not run. Voter registration favors Democrats and President Obama took 62% of the vote.

Kentucky - GOP Senator Jim Bunning is retiring. The Democratic primary will feature Attorney General Jack Conway and Lt. Gov. and '04 nominee Dan Mongiardo. GOP Sec. of State Trey Grayson will face Bowling Green ophthalmologist Rand Paul, son of Texas Rep. Ron Paul. It's an uphill climb for the Dems.

Nevada - A recent poll of voters in Nevada shows Senate Majority Leader **Harry Reid** losing to either Republican Danny Tarkanian or Sue Lowden. Reid's leadership position ties him to President Obama and House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi**, both of whom having declining approval numbers. Tarkanian has run unsuccessfully for state senate and Secretary of State. Lowden is the chairwoman of the state Republican Party.

New Hampshire - GOP Senate candidate Kelly Ayotte is anti-choice,

supports strong gun rights and opposes gay marriage. She does not have a primary opponent and is likely to face JAC-supported Rep. **Paul Hodes** (D).

New York - Rep. **Carolyn Maloney** (D) will not challenge Senator Kirsten Gillibrand in the Democratic primary. Gillibrand was appointed when former Senator **Hillary Clinton** (D) was confirmed as Secretary of State. There are currently no declared Republicans. New York State has two Senate races this cycle. Senator **Chuck Schumer** (D) is running for a full six-year term. The winner of the race to fill Clinton's seat will need to run again in 2012.

Pennsylvania - Rep. **Joe Sestak** is giving up his House seat to challenge Senator **Arlen Specter** in the Democratic primary. Specter switched his party allegiance earlier this year. Sestak called Specter "a political opportunist." Former GOP Rep. Pat Toomey is likely to be the Republican nominee. He nearly beat Specter in the 2004 GOP primary. JAC has supported both Sestak and Specter.

SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn signed a \$31 billion infrastructure improvement plan in July. The bill's aim is to improve roads and bridges, but it also includes millions in grants to local organizations, including many with religious affiliations. Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and the Chicago-based Anti-Defamation League counted 97 but said there could be several more whose names to do not immediately identify then as such. Among the grants that Americans United and ADL feel should be reviewed are \$75,000

for capital improvements to the library at the Chicago Baptist Institute, \$100,000 each for renovations at Mercy Home for Boys and Girls, St. Ann Catholic School and St. Paul Parish, and \$50,000 for a housing project by the Lawndale Christian Development Project. And, the *State Journal Register* of Springfield highlighted \$150,000 to *Kesher* to build a cabin at Camp Chi in Wisconsin. *Kesher* is a Chicago Jewish organization that helps the developmentally disabled "prepare for lives of independence by providing job training and help in gaining

social skills." The group also teaches Torah and prepares kids for Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. Camp Chi is a Jewish camp, subsidized by Chicago Federation. AU and ADL want the state "to require recipients to sign statements that they won't use the money for religious purposes and want the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to ban grants to sectarian organizations that, according to court rulings, cannot separate their religious missions from secular ones." (*Chicago Tribune* 8/19/09)

Choice, continued from page one

steadfastly pro-choice, has adopted a similar framework in tackling the question." Groups supporting the bill include NARAL, Planned Parenthood, the National Women's Law Center,

Catholics for Choice, Sojourners, and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good. The Ryan-DeLauro bill increases funding for Title X of the Public Health Service Act. It restores Medic-

aid entitlement to coverage of family planning services that was repealed in the budget reconciliation bill, and it provides grants to states to reduce teen pregnancy.

Israel, continued from page one

ginal political base at home, calling into question the potential for Fayyad's plan to be implemented.

Seventy-one senators signed a letter urging President Obama to press Arab

leaders to reach out to Israel. "Over the past few months Israel has taken concrete measures to reaffirm its commitment to advancing the peace process...even in the face of continuing threats to its security...We encourage

Arab leaders to take similar tangible steps to demonstrate their commitment to the peace process." The letter was drafted by Senators Evan Bayh (D-IN) and James Risch (R-ID).