

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

September 29, 2008

On my mind this month...



Barbara Bluhm-Kaul

We are at a crossroads where our action or inaction will affect our children and grandchildren in ways we never would

have foreseen eight years ago. That is why I accepted the job of Interim President of JAC.

Our country faces daunting challenges: the war, the economy, health care, energy, and national security. These challenges can be met by a Congress made up of champions of good government, not those who believe government is no good. Through JAC, we must support elected officials who share our vision for a secure and compassionate America and a strong US-Israel relationship.

The Supreme Court has traditionally been our protection against an overreaching Congress or executive branch. That protection is wearing thin. The Court is one justice shy of a hard-right majority that is likely to overturn Roe v. Wade and unlikely to defend the separation of religion and state. The impact of this Court will be felt for generations to come.

What can we do? We can elect a president who will not appoint right wing ideologues to the bench. And no matter who the next president is, we must do all that we can to help elect a Congress that will act as a check against an extreme right Supreme Court.

I look forward to working with you to make progress on these goals. Please pass this Newsbreak on to a friend or relative who isn't yet a JAC member but should be. I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

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

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni won a narrow victory to succeed Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as head of the Kadima Party. Olmert has officially resigned, but under Israeli law he will remain as Prime Minister until Livni is able to create her own government. The cabinet resigned with Olmert. A new coalition must be formed within 42 days or elections will be called within 90 days. Ms. Livni's biggest stumbling block may be the ultra-orthodox Shas party, which has threatened to leave the Kadima-led government. Livni must balance the demands of Shas with the demands of the center-left Labor party, another player in the current fragile coalition. Livni met with Defense Minister Ehud Barak after her election and is scheduled to meet again later this week. Barak hinted that the Labor party is on the way to joining Livni's coalition.

The possibility of a broader national unity coalition with Likud, headed by former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, ended when Netanyahu issued the statement, "We need to do one thing: Let the people choose a new prime minister and a new government...The decision must be given to the people, and only the people."

If Tzipi Livni can form a government, she would become Israel's second female Prime Minister. Golda Meir served from 1969-1974. Three other women are in prominent Israeli leadership positions: Dorit Beinisch is the first woman Supreme Court Chief Justice. Dalia Itzik is chair of the Israeli Parliament. And Gabriela Shalev is the first woman to serve as Israel's U.N. Ambassador.

The United States has approved up to \$330 million in three separate arms deals for Israel. And a bigger deal for 25 Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets could be approved shortly. The current agreement calls for bombs, patriot missile upgrades and anti-armor weapons. Congress has 30 days to block the sales, but no difficulty is expected.

United States

CHOICE

Sen. John McCain, the Republican nominee for President, and his representatives, have consistently called for the overturning of Roe v. Wade. But, they always add that this position simply means that the issue would go back to the states. This is an appeal to independent voters and "pro-choice" Republicans. In an article for the Huffington Post, Donna Crane, policy director for NARAL, outlined the many things wrong with this "McCain generated campaign spin." First, in order for the issue to go to the states, Roe would have to be overturned. (There are currently four absolute anti-choice votes on the Supreme Court and one vote that could go either way). Second, the reversal of Roe would allow Congress to ban abortion and thus override any state laws guaranteeing a woman's right to choose. This Congress does not have a veto proof pro-choice majority. Without such a majority, states can and will make laws banning abortion. According to NARAL, 23 states – or 46 % – are at risk for restricting or banning abortion.

RELIGION/STATE SEPARATION

In response to a small, but very aggressive, group of political and religious leaders who have pushed the leaders of America's houses of worship to use their pulpits to endorse candidates, Americans United for Separation of Church and State launched Project Fair Play in 1996. The purpose of Project Fair Play (<http://projectfairplay.org>) is to educate religious leaders and other Americans about exemption and political activity. The website clarifies federal law and what is permissible.

Houses of worship MAY: discuss public policy issues, sponsor non-partisan voter registration and encourage voting, sponsor candidate forums as long as all leading candidates are invited and a broad range of issues are discussed, urge congregants to com-

Research & Races

At this late stage in the campaigns, our priorities are first to shore up incumbent friends in tight races and next to identify new candidates with whom we can begin a relationship. Here is a run-down on recent candidate donations:

JAC is in 8 of the ten most hotly contested Senate races:

- Democrat **Mark Begich** (challenging popular but scandal-plagued Senator Ted Stevens) in Alaska
- **Mary Landrieu** (endangered Democratic incumbent fighting a difficult challenge for a third term) in Louisiana
- **Mark Udall** (Democratic Congressman seeking a GOP open Senate seat) in Colorado.
- **Al Franken** (challenging vulnerable Republican incumbent Norm Coleman) in Minnesota
- **Jeanne Shaheen** (also challenging a vulnerable GOP incumbent, John Sununu) in New Hampshire.
- **Tom Udall** (like cousin Mark seeking to flip GOP Open Senate seat) in New Mexico
- **Susan Collins** (2-term Republican Senator fending off a challenge) in Maine
- **Kay Hagan** (challenging Republican incumbent Elizabeth Dole) in North Carolina

We are watching the other two, Oregon (Gordon Smith) and Mississippi (Roger Wicker).

Kay Hagan is a new entry this month on the JAC-supported list. She is challenging GOP Sen. Elizabeth Dole and new polls show a close race. Hagan has served for 10 years as a North Carolina state Senator and has been named one of the ten “most effective senators.” As co-chair of the Budget Committee, she has seen to it that the state budget increased teacher pay and expanded early childhood educa-

tion, as well as expanding health care coverage for children. Her uncle is Lawton Chiles, former US Senator and Governor of Florida.

In the House, JAC made additional contributions to shore up the following incumbents:

- **Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (AZ-08)**
- **Rep. Melissa Bean (IL-08)**
- **Rep. Bill Foster (IL-14)**
- **Rep. Nancy Boyda (KS-02)**
- **Rep. John Yarmuth (KY-03)**
- **Rep. John Adler (NJ-03)**
- **Rep. Steve Cohen (TN-09)**
- **Rep. Steve Kagan (WI-08)**

and open seat contender:

- **Debbie Halvorson (IL-11)**

Contributions went to old friends in leadership positions:

- **Joe Crowley (NY-07)**
- **Nita Lowey (NY-18)**
- **David Obey (WI-07)**

Five new House candidates received support:

Ethan Berkowitz (AK-at-large) came to Alaska in 1991, worked as a law clerk and a state prosecutor. He was elected to the Alaska legislature in 1996, served for 10 years, and was the ‘06 Dem. nominee for Lt. Governor. He is running against GOP Rep. Don Young, a member of Congress for 36 years, who is currently under investigation for ethics violations.

Chellie Pingree (ME-01) was a small business owner until she ran for state Senate in 1991. Pingree served four terms and was elected Majority Leader in 1996. She ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 2002 Pingree was the sponsor of one of the nation’s first prescription drug pricing bills, MeRx, which has become an example for states trying to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. This is an Open Seat.

Dina Titus (NV-03) has been involved in education and public service for her entire adult life. She has taught American Government and Nevada Government at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, for 30 years. Titus was elected to the st. Senate in 1998 and has served as minority leader since 2003. She has worked to protect the environment and develop renewable energy. She is challenging GOP Rep. Jon Porter, whose voting record is in line with his Party.

Dennis Shulman (NJ-5) is an author, educator, rabbi and clinical psychologist. He has been blind from early childhood. In 1972, the same year he graduated from Brandeis, Shulman’s volunteer activities earned him a Special White House Commendation for Outstanding Humanitarian Service. He is the author of *The Genius of Genesis - A Psychoanalyst and Rabbi Examines the First Book of the Bible*. Shulman is running against GOP Rep. Scott Garrett. Garrett’s voting record on JAC’s domestic issues and other issues of concern to the Jewish community couldn’t be worse.

Martin Heinrich (NM-01) is a small businessman, the principal in a public affairs consulting firm serving not-for-profit and education clients. He has served for 4 years on the Albuquerque City Council, including a term as council president. Heinrich was named Natural Resources Trustee for the state of New Mexico. This is an Open seat.

It’s now or never. Please consider an additional JAC donation to help support these candidates. You can call it in to 847.433.5999. If you have already done so, thank you.

Separation, continued from page one

communicate with candidates and make their concerns known.

Houses of worship MAY NOT: issue statements endorsing or opposing candidates, donate money to a candidate, offer space to one candidate and refuse it to another, or sponsor rallies for candidates in their facilities. Violations of IRS regulations and federal laws can result in fines, assessment of back taxes and even revocation of tax

exempt status.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), through its Pulpit Initiative, is encouraging clergy to endorse candidates from the pulpit and purposely violate their tax-exempt status in order to force a court case. September 28th was designated as “Pulpit Freedom Sunday.”

In a similar effort to that of Americans

United, The Interfaith Alliance has asked clergy to sign a pledge to uphold standards that conform to the federal laws. Several prominent clergy, ministers, rabbis and imams have already signed on to the pledge which can be downloaded and faxed back to the Interfaith Alliance. Americans United and the Interfaith Alliance ask you to share this pledge with your clergy and ask them to sign. http://www.interfaithalliance.org/clergy_pledge