

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

June 27, 2010

On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

The impact of JAC advocacy is best understood when we meet with members of Congress in Washington. Last week a small group of JAC members endured the DC heat

to advocate for vital issues and to participate in the political process. Our day started with a briefing on the Iran Sanctions legislation. In our meetings with Senators, we asked them to vote for the bill. The next day, the legislation passed. Briefed on reproductive choice legislation, we asked them to endorse the amendment to end the military abortion ban. That issue is pending and needs our continued vigilance. In the same vein, we asked them to sponsor the International Violence Against Women Act which is in danger due to "deficit spending" cuts. With the Gulf oil spill threatening an environmental catastrophe, we urged the Senators to pass a comprehensive energy and climate bill.

Whenever we have doubts about our impact, we are reassured. Members of Congress respect our work and claim our presence invigorates them. It was valuable for us to hear their take on the issues. Those we visited were interested to learn what was on our minds. Sometimes we shared information unknown to them -- information learned in our briefings.

We had dinner at Rep. Shelley Berkley's home. Six other members of Congress stopped by, among them Reps. Dina Titus (D-NV) and Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ). They have extremely tough races. Their conversations about the issues and the work yet to be done emphasized that we need to keep these women in Congress. I was moved to contribute to and volunteer for their campaigns. Join me in supporting them. Come with us to Washington next time -- and bring friends. Together we make a difference.

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Israel

The UN Security Council recently voted 16-2 in favor of sanctions against Iran's nuclear program, with strong leadership by the Obama administration. Congress got to work on more biting sanctions. Although many felt that the UN sanctions were weak, they laid the ground work for the rest of the world to put stronger measures in place, especially in the petroleum and banking sectors.

On June 24th, both houses of Congress passed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act. They are now awaiting the President's signature on the reconciled, bipartisan bill. The Senate voted 99-0, and the House voted 408-8 to punish foreign suppliers of gasoline and to block banks doing business with Iran from doing business with American companies or the government. According to Congressman Klein (D-FL), a leader in the small group that crafted the final House-Senate Iran sanctions bill, "...[C]ompanies must make a choice between doing business with the U.S. government or do business with Iran. We can not allow Iran to continue trying to develop nuclear weapons."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says that these are the strongest Iran sanctions ever passed by the Congress. The legislation is important because Iran's nuclear weapons capability would pose grave threats to the national security of the United States, Israel, as well as the Middle East, Europe and Asia. The legislation also aims to support the Iranian opposition by allowing transfers of technology that would thwart attempts at repression.

This bill will be on the President's desk before the July 4th holiday. Analysts debate whether these sanctions will actually divert Iran from its nuclear weapons program. But military action by the US or Israel is an option no one wants to pursue and this measure is intended to forestall.

more about Israel on page 2

United States

CHOICE

The Senate Armed Services committee passed an amendment to the Department of Defense Authorization bill that would allow abortions at overseas military bases. Currently physicians at overseas bases can perform abortions only in cases of rape, incest or when the mother's life is in danger. Under the amendment, female service members and military dependents stationed overseas would have access to abortions, provided they pay for the procedure themselves. No military doctors would be required to perform abortions if they object to the practice. The ban was first imposed in spending bills in the late 1970s and was codified in defense policy in 1985. President Clinton issued an executive order in 1993 allowing the procedure. In 1995, Republicans reimposed the ban.

Florida Governor Charlie Crist vetoed a bill that would have required a woman to have an ultrasound before an abortion. Crist explained his veto calling the bill an "inappropriate burden on a woman..." The Governor says that although his personal views are "pro-life" such views "should not result in laws that unwisely expand the role of government and coerce people to obtain medical tests or procedures that are not medically necessary." As mentioned last month, many states have enacted similar legislation. In Oklahoma, the legislature overrode a veto by Governor Brad Henry.

PersonhoodUSA has not been able to collect the required number of signatures - 97,002 - to put its anti-abortion constitutional amendment on Nevada's November ballot. In 2008, Colorado voters rejected a proposed constitutional amendment almost identical to Nevada's. The PersonhoodUSA organization is trying to find a legal way to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. In Justice Harry Blackmun's *Roe* decision, Blackmun said, "if personhood could be established for a fetus, then the fetus' right to life would be guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution."

Research & Races

Election Results

The current House Lineup is: 255 Democrats, 178 Republicans, 2 Vacancies - IN-03 and NY-29. Both special elections will be held on election day, November 2. Republicans would have to win 40 additional seats to gain control of the House.

2010 Primary Results

Arkansas -- Senator Blanche Lincoln defeated Arkansas Lt. Governor Bill Halter in the June 8 Democratic runoff. Lincoln was the underdog going into the May 18th primary and the June 8 runoff -- attacked from right for supporting health care reform and from the left for opposing the public option. JAC supported Senator Lincoln when she was a House member and in her two previous Senate races and will continue to do so. She faces GOP Rep. John Boozman in November in a race that will be down to the wire. Boozman is the younger brother of Lincoln's opponent in her first Senate race.

California -- Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer's opponent in November is Republican Carly Fiorina, who

defeated former Rep. Tom Campbell and Assemblyman Chuck DeVore. She is the former CEO of Hewlett Packard. She was also a senior advisor to Senator John McCain's presidential campaign in 2008. Fiorina's immense fortune could make this the most expensive race in the country. Fiorina has a tart tongue and a penchant for becoming unpopular. Boxer is tenacious and will do everything to turn away her challenger. JAC has supported Senator Boxer since her first election to the House in 1982 right up to the present.

Nevada -- Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid will be challenged by former state representative and congressional candidate Sharron Angle. Angle won a crowded primary with 40 per cent, defeating the party favorite. Reid's poll numbers are low -- driven by Nevada's economic woes. His campaign is working to make the race about Angle. She received over \$400,000 in independent funding from the Tea Party Express and \$475,000 from the conservative Club for Growth. She has said she would do away with Social Security and close

the Department of Education. Not much has been heard from Angle since her primary win. Reid is a master of the legislative and political processes, bringing about passage of some of the most contentious and important legislation. JAC supports Harry Reid.

North Carolina -- Secretary of State Elaine Marshall (D) will challenge 1st-term GOP Senator Richard Burr. Burr's votes on Israel have been good, but his domestic record is negative. Marshall won a three-person primary with less than 50%, forcing a runoff. She won the runoff. It's too early to tell if this is a race for JAC to consider.

Please contribute today!

Sen. Harry Reid

— "Friends for Harry Reid"

Sen. Barbara Boxer

— "Friends of Barbara Boxer"

Sen. Blanche Lincoln

— "Friends of Blanche Lincoln"

JAC

— donations will be allocated to candidates

Thank you for your support.

International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA)

In February the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) was introduced in the House and the Senate, with strong bipartisan support. The act makes combating gender-based violence a "strategic foreign policy imperative," according to Sen. John Kerry's (D-MA) office. JAC members promoted this issue on Capitol Hill recently, asking Senators for action on the measure.

"Nations with the worst track record in preventing violence against women are also the most unstable and are breeding grounds for terrorism," said Rep. Bill Delahunt (D-MA), a sponsor of the bill.

IVAWA was introduced by Kerry, Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Susan Collins (R-ME), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Reps. Ted Poe (R-TX) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL). The bill addresses,

for the first time, violence against women and girls through all relevant US foreign policy efforts, including its international assistance programs. It would also make the issue a diplomatic priority for the first time, asking the United States to respond within three months to horrific acts of violence against women and girls committed during conflict and war and to bring perpetrators of violence to justice.

Israel, continued from page one

The flotilla incident has led to recent developments in the United States and around the world. President Obama and Congress were quick to show support for Israel and insist on its right to self defense. In letters written to the President, Congressional Democrats and Republicans were united in their objections to international probes of the incident. The President defended Israel's right to keep weapons from reaching Gaza and its ability to conduct a fair investigation of the incident.

It comes as no surprise that world condemnation of Israel and demands for

the blockade to be lifted were swift; but voices emerged recommending caution. Both Egypt and PA President Abbas oppose lifting the naval blockade, fearing it would bolster Hamas' power. PM Netanyahu did lift restrictions on many food products going to Gaza, but he insists they go on land and be inspected by Israel to prevent weapons from being smuggled in. Former British PM Tony Blair hailed the deal to keep out arms while allowing "building materials and foodstuffs essential to normal daily life."

Congress urged that the Turkish aid group. IHH, that sent out the flotilla,

should be further investigated and considered for placement on the list of foreign terrorist organizations.

This incident has had severe ramifications for relations between Turkey and the US and Israel and Turkey. Relations were already at risk due to the growing power of Islamists in traditionally secular, pro-Western Turkey. In 1949 Turkey was the first and only Muslim country to recognize Israel. The two countries have had a 20-year strategic alliance that is in a precarious state. It remains to be seen whether Islamists or secularists will prevail in Turkey. The world is watching.