

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

March 26, 2007

On my mind this month...

Spring has finally arrived in Washington. Along with the cherry blossoms comes the JAC conference. Our reputation on Capitol Hill for being among the brightest and most prepared activists stems from the wealth of information that is provided to us. From JAC briefing papers to in-depth analyses by noted experts on foreign policy and domestic issues, we go to the Hill ready to listen, question and converse with members of Congress. We meet with dozens of members in small groups to insure that the meetings are intimate and afford time for the give and take that is necessary.



Jackie Abelman-Cohen

The conference agenda is almost complete. We have invited the new Israeli Ambassador to the US, Sallai Meridor. In addition to the up-to-the-minute briefings on US/Israel relations, health care and environmental issues, we will host a dinner for the JAC members of Congress on Tuesday evening and a breakfast on Wednesday morning with the JAC supported freshmen members of the House and lunch with JAC supported members of the Senate. We have also invited Majority Leader, Steny Hoyer.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having our voice heard on Capitol Hill, and the energy and excitement that the event generates in our members. Don't wait any longer, sign up today. 847-433-5999 or www.jacpac.org. See you in my beautiful city and your capital.

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Israel

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told a House committee this week that the administration will reduce by about 40% the aid it had requested for the security forces of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. There is concern that some of the funds could find its way to Hamas. There will also be new conditions for monitoring any of the money which is sent. The revised request would be for about \$50 million, down from \$86 million, for fiscal 2008. "I have formulated the plan," Ms. Rice said. "It will request less money, precisely because some of the money I would have requested, I could not fully account for." Direct international aid to the Palestinian Authority was suspended more than a year ago when Hamas won control of the government in elections. The new unity government is still dominated by Hamas. However, a report published by the International Herald Tribune showed that the actual money received by the Palestinians after the international boycott was in place actually exceeded the amount received before Hamas took control. Foreign donors accounted for \$1.2 billion in 2006, up from \$1 billion in 2005. American aid also increased during 2006. The Quartet - the United States, Russia, the UN and the European Union - issued a statement saying, "the new government would not be judged only on its 'composition and platform, but also on its actions.'"

The new Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Sallai Meridor, spoke to the Chicago's JCRC on March 20. Ambassador Meridor touched on several areas of interest. He pointed out that although there have been some "secret" talks between Syria and Israel, Syria is rearming along its border in greater force than Israel has seen anytime in the last 20 years. In the south, a

Israel, continued on reverse side

United States

Democratic Gov. Bill Ritter of Colorado signed legislation last week requiring hospitals to tell rape victims about the availability of emergency contraception. This capped a year long effort by st. Sen. Betty Boyd to make the pills more readily available. "Persistence really does pay off," Boyd told a crowd of abortion-rights activists who attended the bills' signing ceremony. Ritter, a Catholic, who opposes abortion, noted the bill's exception for medical professionals who have religious or moral objections to personally providing the information. However, the measure requires that hospitals, even Catholic institutions - find someone on staff to relay the information. Boyd tried to pass some form of emergency contraception legislation for each of the past five years. Lawmakers passed bills in 2005 and 2006, but then GOP Gov. Bill Owens vetoed both.

Separation of Religion and State
The House Education and Labor Committee approved legislation reauthorizing Head Start early education after defeating an attempt to add an amendment that would have allowed faith-based organizations to hire teachers on the basis of religion. Faith based groups that now offer Head Start programs are restricted from considering religion when hiring. The bill now goes to the House floor and the restrictive amendment could be introduced again.

The Illinois Senate passed legislation on March 21 that "would require public school students to observe a moment of silence." According to the Chicago Tribune, this legislation gives lawmakers a chance to work around constitutional prohibitions against school prayer. Currently the law allows schools to have a moment of silence. The "quiet" period is followed by some teachers, and not by others. The state Senate

Research and Races 2008

U.S. House of Representatives Vulnerable Freshmen

Any time a candidate wins with less than 55%, he or she is considered to be vulnerable in the next cycle and becomes a target for the opposition party. The 2006 cycle, in which Democrats picked up seats which were considered safe for the GOP during the majority of the campaign, produced a number of vulnerable 1st-term members. Although it's too early in the cycle to know who the challengers will be, these are districts to watch.

AZ-05	Harry Mitchell	Dem. Harry Mitchell captured the 5th district seat, defeating incumbent GOP Rep. J.D. Hayworth with 51%. Hayworth refused to concede for almost a week following the election. Hayworth made some outrageous remarks during the campaign, opening the door for a well liked and well known opponent but keeping this seat could be a challenge for Democrats.
AZ-08	Gabrielle Giffords	Dem. Gabrielle Giffords won this open seat with 54%, but demographics in the 8th district lean Republican. GOP Rep. Jim Kolbe held the seat for 22 years and always won by comfortable margins. But Kolbe was a pro-choice, moderate Republican and Giffords' opponent in 2006 was a strong conservative. A moderate Republican with good name ID could give Giffords a tough race in '08.
FL-22	Ron Klein	Republicans have targeted Dem. freshman Ron Klein in Florida's 22nd district. This district was previously held by GOP Rep. Clay Shaw for 26 years, and Klein's margin was only 51%. The name most often mentioned as Klein's opponent is Boca Raton Mayor Steven Abrams. Abrams is serving his third two-year term as the city's mayor.
KS-02	Nancy Boyda	Dem. Nancy Boyda surprised everyone, including her opponent, GOP Rep. Jim Ryun. Boyda ran in 2004, capturing only 46%, but this time she was able to defeat Ryun with 51%. Boyda was recently in Chicago and has already started campaigning and fundraising for what will be a difficult race in 2008. Ryun is talking about a rematch.
KY-03	John Yarmuth	JAC was not in this race with Dem. John Yarmuth who defeated GOP Rep. Anne Northup with 51%. Northup held this seat for 5 terms and won in 2004 with 60%. JAC had supported Northup's challengers in the past. But in 2006, this was one of those "safe" seats that turned out not to be safe. Yarmuth will be at the top of the GOP target list.
NH-01, -02	Carol Shea-Porter, Paul Hodes	Two new freshmen were elected in this state, Carol Shea-Porter in the 1st district defeating GOP Rep. Jeb Bradley with 51% and Paul Hodes winning over Charles Bass with 53%. Neither race was in the "toss-up" column the month prior to the election. In a state with two Republican Senators, it won't be easy for Democrats to keep these seats.
NY-24	Michael Arcuri	Michael Arcuri won New York's 24th district with 54%. As was the case in Arizona's 8th district, this was an open seat held previously by moderate Republican Sherwood Boehlert. It is considered a "swing" district with demographics slightly favoring the GOP. Democrats did well in upstate New York capturing this open seat and surprisingly defeating two "safe" incumbents. Arcuri could have a difficult race against a well known moderate Republican.
TX-22	Nick Lampson	Dem. Nick Lampson was elected to this seat held by former GOP Majority leader Tom DeLay. Lampson is a top target for Republicans in a district with a registered Republican majority. Voters were so angry with corruption in D.C. that they crossed party lines to elect Lampson. This will be a tough district to hold in 2008

Separation of Religion and State

passed the bill 58-1 and sent it to the House.

FYI

On March 13, the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee approved a bill (HR 493) that would prohibit employers and insurers from collecting genetic data or using

that data in business decisions such as hiring and firing or determining insurance premiums. An amendment offered by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) would prohibit treating genetic information as a pre-existing condition, closing a loophole in the legislation that might allow insurers

to deny coverage.

ACTION ALERT

Please call your representative (202-224-3121) and let him/her know that you oppose any amendment to the Head Start bill (HR 1429) that would allow religious discrimination in hiring of teachers.

Israel, continued

major buildup backed by Iran, is occurring in Gaza. Gaza is turning into a terrorist state, with the terrorists both producing and smuggling missiles and explosives. The explosives are so sophisticated that they can now be kept for years without losing their strength. Hamas is training an army, numbering about 12,000, with the help of leaders from Iran. Israel feels the threat from Iran is greater than any threat since the 1930's. To halt Iran's aggression requires

immediate world action. Significant economic pressure could have excellent results. Half of Iran's revenues come from its oil exports, while its oil producing facilities are crumbling and need to be updated. Last year, the European Union sold more to Iran than it received. If it were clear that any international corporation doing business with Iran would be prohibited from doing business with the United States, business with Iran would be greatly curtailed and

their economy would suffer accordingly. The United States has an existing Iran Sanctions Act, but Israel feels it needs to be much stronger and honored by the international community.

In spite of a possible threat from Syria, the danger of Iran and the stalled peace process, Israel's rate of economic growth increased from 4.1% to 5% in 2006. Ambassador Meridor ended by saying, "Don't ever give up on hope."