

JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

November 24, 2008

On my mind this month...



Barbara Bluhm-Kaul

I am still on a high after the results of this historic election. We have been in the wilderness for too long, but now we have

hope, even in this difficult and scary time. While we are building relationships with the new members of Congress, we already have a close relationship with President-elect Obama. We were his early supporters when he ran for the Senate. He knows who JAC is and supports what we stand for. We also have strong relationships with Vice President-elect Joseph Biden, Chief-of-Staff Rahm Emanuel, HHS Secretary-designate Tom Daschle and, no doubt, others yet to be appointed.

Not everyone we support will go on to become President, but every leader was once a newcomer. I appreciate all of you who faithfully send in your membership dues. Your timely response means we can continue to identify candidates, give them early support and establish an ongoing dialogue. JAC's coffers are empty and need refilling for 2010. Vulnerable incumbents are already gearing up and we need to be there for them.

We all have the opportunity to meet with the new members of Congress that we helped elect by coming to the JAC Washington conference in March. It is an experience like no other. You meet face-to-face with Senators and Representatives, and not just from your home states. You receive up-to-the-minute briefings by high-level officials. You will see for yourself the high regard with which JAC is held in Washington. Please mark your calendar, March 10-11, 2009 for the JAC Annual Meeting and watch your mail and email for more information.

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Israel

On Thursday, December 18, Hamas declared the end of a six-month old ceasefire with Israel in the Gaza Strip. "The calm, which was reached with Egyptian sponsorship on June 19 and expires on December 19, is finished because the enemy did not abide by its obligations," said Hamas member Ayman Taha, who represented the group in talks with other Palestinian factions. "The calm is over." By Thursday afternoon, 11 Kassam rockets and five mortar shells had pounded southern Israel. Israeli warplanes and helicopters followed with strikes against terror infrastructure in Gaza for the first time in six months. Violence had picked up in the days before the truce was due to end. One Palestinian man was killed and three Israeli children were wounded. This week, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said her country "cannot tolerate Hamas controlling the Gaza Strip indefinitely as "an extreme Islamic state." And, in the days leading up to the end of the cease fire, Israeli Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, said "As long as Gaza is calm, it will be met with calm, but if the calm is violated and the situation requires it, we will act." (Ynet news.com 12/18/08; Bloomberg.com 12/18/08)

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution on December 16 backing the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian peace process begun at Annapolis last year. The resolution sponsored jointly by the United States and Russia, passed with 14 nations voting in favor and Libya abstaining. Both Israel and the Palestinians responded favorably to the resolution. Foreign Minister Livni said that "the Security Council's clear support is a vote of confidence...there can be no turning back the clock...We have to continue on the chosen path." The Palestinian UN observer, Ryad Mansour, expressed hope "that the sides will remove all obstacles and reach a peace treaty in 2009."

The Israeli Supreme Court has ordered that the route of the security

United States

CHOICE

Cardinal Francis George, the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said at the group's national meeting that while they "rejoice at the election of an African-American president, they should confront him over his support for abortion rights...the common good can never be adequately incarnated in any society when those waiting to be born can be legally killed at choice." The bishops also plan to challenge President-elect Obama on his statement that he is considering overturning President Bush's directive that bans most research on embryonic stem cells. Nevertheless, exit polls found that 54% of Catholic voters had voted for the Obama-Biden ticket. Archbishop George Niederauer of San Francisco said he felt that the primary concern for voters was the state of the economy and "their own economic situation." The bishops are also divided on whether to deny communion to Catholic politicians who support abortion rights.

The Bush administration plans to grant new protections to health care providers who oppose abortion and related procedures dealing with reproductive health. The proposed rule "would prohibit recipients of federal money from discriminating against doctors, nurses and other health care workers who refuse to perform or to assist in the performance of abortions or sterilization procedures because of their religious beliefs or moral convictions." It would also prevent hospitals, clinics, doctors' offices and drugstores from requiring employees with "religious or moral objections" to "assist in the performance of any part of a health service program or research activity financed by the Department of Health and Human Services." President-elect Obama said the proposal "will raise new hurdles to women seeking reproductive health services," and that he would try to rescind it. That process could take several months.

Research & Races

This was a successful election for JAC and it couldn't have happened without you. JAC endorsed Barack Obama for President and individual members were involved and contributed to his campaign. President-elect Obama did not accept PAC contributions. You helped elect 6 of the 9 new senators **Mark Begich (AK), Mark Udall (CO), Jeanne Shaheen (NH), Tom Udall (NM), Kay Hagan (NC), and Mark Warner (VA)**. They join the 10 incumbent senators JAC also supported. (There are two Senate races still undecided: Minnesota and Georgia. JAC supports **Al Franken**, the challenger in Minnesota. The PAC is not involved in Georgia.) There are 51 new members of the House, and again, you helped elect 10 of the new members

- **John Adler (NJ), Debbie Halvorson (IL), Martin Heinrich (NM), Ann Kirkpatrick (AZ), Betsy Markey (CO), Walt Minnick (ID), Gary Peters (MI), Chellie Pingree (ME), Mark Schauer (MI), and Dina Titus (NV)**. In addition, JAC contributed to the campaigns of 30 incumbents.

SENATE -2010

It is not too early to think about the 2010 Senate races. Sixteen seats held by Democrats are up. This includes the seats now held by **Joe Biden** in Delaware and **Barack Obama** in Illinois. Both of those seats will be filled by Senators appointed by the states' governors. If those who are appointed want to remain in the Senate, they will have to run in 2010. JAC has sup-

ported all of the remaining 14 senators: **Blanche Lincoln (AR), Barbara Boxer (CA), Chris Dodd (CT), Ken Salazar (CO), Daniel Inouye (HI), Evan Bayh (IN), Barbara Mikulski (MD), Harry Reid (NV), Chuck Schumer (NY), Byron Dorgan (ND), Ron Wyden (OR), Patrick Leahy (VT), Patty Murray (WA), and Russ Feingold (WI)**. Sen. Inouye is a potential retirement. He will be 86 in 2010. Nineteen seats are held by Republicans. JAC has supported **Arlen Specter (PA)** who could be a potential retirement due to health reasons. John McCain (AZ) announced his intention to run for reelection this week. Three of the GOP Senators are considered vulnerable - Mel Martinez (FL), Jim Bunning (KY) and David Vitter (LA).

FRESHMAN CLASS STATISTICS

SENATE	CLASS OF 2008	HOUSE
59	Average age	49
2	Number of women	10
0	Number of African Americans	1
0	Number of Hispanics	1
4	Number of lawyers	9
0	Number with military service	12
0	Number of medical doctors	3
6	Number with advanced degrees	29
2	Number who defeated incumbents	19
4	Number elected with 55% or more of the vote	24
3	Number elected with less than 55% of the vote	25
7	Number who held previous elected office	35
2	Number who have run for Congress before	5

All but one incumbent Jewish US Senator won re-election. Minnesota is in a recount, but incumbent and challenger are both Jewish. All House incumbents won re-election.

There remain 13 Jewish Senators.

Three new Jewish Reps. were elected, bringing the total from 29 to 32.

Eric Canter remains the only Jewish Republican in the House.

Jewish governors increased from two to three with the election of Jack Markell of DE. Ed Rendell of PA and Linda Lingle of HI were not up for re-election.

Separation of Religion and State

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal has refused to renew an expiring executive order that protects against "faith based" hiring discrimination. Former Governor Kathleen Blanco had added sexual orientation to a list of protected areas under anti-discrimination laws. Her order also banned discrimination in providing government services and it required business contracting with the state "to profess non-discrimination." Jindal allowed the executive order to lapse because, he said, "it prevented faith-based groups that discriminate in hiring from receiving money from the state." He also said, "it was not necessary to create additional categories of special rights." A public policy analyst for Focus on the Family responded that "these types of laws are simply an

attempt to silence and penalize the religious convictions of employers." St. Rep. Juan LaFonta of New Orleans told the Advocate that Gov. Jindal "should represent all the people of the state not just the people he chooses to support."

A previous Newsbreak reported on "Pulpit Freedom Sunday," an event organized by the Alliance Defense Fund, a religious right legal group founded in 1993. ADF solicited pastors to take part in a scheme to deliberately violate federal tax law by endorsing or opposing political candidates from the pulpit. Americans United for the Separation of Church and State reported six offenders to the IRS - Pastor Jody Hice of the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Bethlehem, GA urged his

congregation to vote for Sen. John McCain, not Barack Obama; Pastor Paul Blair of Edmond, Oklahoma said "that as an American citizen, he would be voting for John McCain."; Pastor Gus Booth of Warroad, Minnesota, told his congregation that the "most righteous is John McCain."; Pastor Luke Emrich of West Bend, WI, said "I'm telling you straight up I would choose life. I would cast a vote for John McCain and Sarah Palin." The Alliance Defense Fund also released a list of clergy who had agreed to endorse candidates despite the federal tax law ban on electioneering by churches. Nothing has been reported as to whether or not any of these congregations have lost their tax-exempt status or been taken to court by the IRS.