

# JAC NEWSbreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

July 25, 2011

## On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

Suggestion to all politicians: Promise not to promise. Sign no pledges. Make no vows you cannot keep. Instead pledge to consider each issue based on its merit. It all

started in 1986 with Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, who asked lawmakers to sign a pledge never to raise taxes. To date 236 US Representatives and 41 Senators have signed, standing in the way of any compromise on the budget, dealing with the debt ceiling, regulating the tax code or stimulating the economy.

Other conservative groups are using pledges of their own to determine candidates' ideological purity. The Susan B. Anthony List 2012 Pro-life Presidential Leadership Pledge requires that presidential candidates commit to an extreme anti-abortion platform. Four of the declared candidates have refused to sign on.

A right wing religious group in Iowa, led by Bobby Vander Platts, proposed the Marriage Vow. Signers pledge not to cheat on their spouses, to ban porn, to declare gays are gay because they choose to be gay, to ban abortion, to reject Shariah law, and so on. Only Michele Bachmann and Rick Santorum have signed this one.

The Cut, Cap and Balance Pledge, sponsored by Let Freedom Ring USA and other conservative groups, requires signers to vow not to raise the debt ceiling unless current spending is cut, future spending is capped and a balanced budget constitutional amendment is sent to the states. This irresponsible pledge could wipe out entitlement programs and tie lawmakers hands for generations. All but Jon Huntsmen have signed it.

Bottom line: Ideological vows do not make for good governance.

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## Israel

Speaking to Arabic language television station Al-Arabiya, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "Everything is on the table....But we need to get to the table....I'm prepared to negotiate with President Abbas directly for peace between our two peoples right now. We can do it here in my home in Jerusalem, we can do it in Ramallah (in the West Bank,) we can do it anywhere." Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians have been on hold since late September 2010. Palestinians said they would not renew direct negotiations until Israel renewed the freeze on settlement construction. Netanyahu declined. The reconciliation between Abbas' Fatah party and Hamas threw another wrench into the mix. Netanyahu said it was impossible to seek peace with any group that does not recognize Israel's right to exist and Hamas not only doesn't recognize Israel's right to exist but calls for it to be wiped off the face of the earth. Although, there may be a reconciliation, there still isn't any agreement. An earlier meeting in Cairo between Fatah and Hamas failed to create a unity government. The two parties have agreed to try again later this month. In the meantime, Netanyahu is trying to restart talks and prevent, or at least delay, efforts to seek recognition of a Palestinian state by the United Nations. The United States has said it would veto recognition in the Security Council so the Palestinian Authority would have to go to the General Assembly. A positive vote in the General Assembly would be strictly symbolic, but it would boost the Palestinian cause around the world and could further isolate Israel. On July 7, the House voted 407-6 to reaffirm the United States commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The resolution was introduced on May 13 by Eric Cantor (R-VA) and Steny Hoyer (D-MD).

The House Foreign Affairs Committee passed a foreign aid bill on July

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## United States

### REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Since the early debates of last year's Affordable Care Act, the fight over women's reproductive health rights has remained central; however, the latest battle over contraception appears to just be warming up. The independent Institute of Medicine released a report on July 19th with recommendations about preventive health care for women within the context of the new healthcare law. The document released includes eight broad recommendations for generally strengthening preventive health care services that have the potential to greatly improve women's health on a national scale. Government entities as well as experts in the private sector have long recognized contraceptive services as crucial and effective means of improving preventive and public health care, while research strongly advocates that the use of contraceptives helps women to avoid unintended pregnancy, improve birth spacing and generally demonstrates substantial benefits in the health and well-being of infants, women, and families.

These recommendations were compiled from an exhaustive review of evidence, and cover areas from a woman's annual preventive care health visits, specific services for pregnant women and nursing mothers, counseling and screening for those affected by HIV and domestic violence, and services for the early detection of reproductive cancers and sexually transmitted diseases. IOM released these recommendations with the intent to encourage that important gaps be closed in existing services already covered in the healthcare reform law. If the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services endorses the recommendations outlined, private insurance plans will be required to cover the recommended services, including all contraceptive services and supplies approved by the FDA, without cost-sharing out-of-pocket costs, including co-pays or deductibles. However, even if the Depart-

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# Research & Races

## 2012 House Outlook

There are currently 193 Democrats, 240 Republicans and 2 vacancies in the House. Democrats need a net gain of 25 seats to recapture the majority. In reality, they probably need 35 seats. The party is likely to lose at least 11 seats because of redistricting and retirements. In Michigan, California and possibly Pennsylvania, redistricting has put two Democratic incumbents in the same district. In states where Republicans control the new district maps, some “safe” Democrats are now in GOP districts. Only in Illinois, where Democrats control both houses of the legislature, does redistricting mean that Democrats could increase the numbers in their delegation. In the states losing seats, both parties appear to lose equally. But in the states gaining seats, Republicans are likely to come out on top. Three of the four new Texas seats are likely Republican as are new seats in Utah, South Carolina and Georgia. The nonpartisan redistricting commission in Arizona means the new seat there could go either way. In Florida, the Republican legislature and Republican governor are constrained by a new “fair districts” state constitutional amendment. Democrats are expected to pick up the new seats in Nevada and Washington.

## 2012 Senate Update

The conservative group Crossroads GPS has initiated the second portion of its proposed \$20 million advertising blitz, including targeting five incumbent Democratic senators. The ads will go specifically after Democratic

Senators **Bill Nelson** (FL), **Claire McCaskill** (MO), **Jon Tester** (MT), **Ben Nelson** (NE) and **Sherrod Brown** (OH). All, except Nelson of Nebraska, who is not pro-choice, are JAC-supported. Crossroads GPS is a 501(c)(4), affiliated with the American Crossroads “super PAC.” As a 501(c)(4), Crossroads GPS can accept unlimited contributions and doesn’t have to name its donors. It can only run issue-based ads. The state-specific ads feature an iPad like device on which each Democratic senator’s words on the budget and debt are contrasted with their records. A Democratic rival super PAC, Priorities USA, recently went up with \$750,000 worth of its own ads to fight back against the Crossroads buy. (*Washington Post*, Morning Fix, 7/8/2011)

**Florida** -- A three-way GOP primary features former appointed Senator George LeMieux, state House Majority Leader Adam Hasner and former Ruth’s Chris CEO Craig Miller. JAC-supported Democratic Senator **Bill Nelson** leads by double digits although he is still under 50%.

**Massachusetts** -- There is speculation that Elizabeth Warren, the architect behind the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, created to police many financial products, could be recruited to challenge Republican Senator Scott Brown. Although Massachusetts is a “blue” state, this would be an uphill battle. Brown is a strong fundraiser and tireless campaigner.

**Michigan** -- JAC-supported Democrat-

ic Senator **Debbie Stabenow** is running for her 3rd term. Perfect on all of JAC’s issues, she has been a recipient of JAC’s contributions since her days in the House. She is being challenged by former GOP Rep. Peter Hoekstra, who retired from the House in 2010 to make an unsuccessful run for Governor. He will be a formidable opponent. Hoekstra was the ranking GOP member of the Intelligence Committee.

**New Mexico** - Open - Democratic Senator **Jeff Bingaman** is retiring. Both parties will have competitive primaries. On the Republican side, there appears to be a four-way race between former Rep. Heather Wilson, Lt. Gov. John Sanchez, businessman Greg Sowards and businessman Bill English. The real race is between Wilson and Sanchez. Democrats are looking at a three-way primary featuring Rep. **Martin Heinrich**, state Auditor Hector Balderas and activist Andres Valdez. JAC has supported Heinrich. Anglo versus Hispanic could become an important factor given the state’s 45% Hispanic population.

**Wisconsin** - Open - GOP Senator Herb Kohl is retiring. This is a GOP takeover opportunity in a state that elected a GOP Senator (ousting 3-term Senator **Russ Feingold**) and a GOP Governor in 2010. With no frontrunners in either party, this a “toss-up” down to the wire. Former Gov. Tommy Thompson is the likely GOP nominee. Democratic Rep. **Tammy Baldwin** is eyeing the race. She could face a primary challenge from Rep. Ron Kind, whose voting record is more centrist than hers.

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20 which would slice \$6.4 billion from the administration’s \$51 billion request for 2012. The committee’s measure retains \$3 billion in military aid for Israel but makes aid to Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority contingent on the administrations “certifying that no members of terrorist organizations or their sympathizers were serving in their governments.” The bill also holds up security and

civilian aid to Pakistan unless the administration “certified that Pakistan was making progress on fighting terrorism.” Amendments to the bill cut Washington’s contribution to the UN by 25% and eliminated U.S. dues to the Organization of American States. The bill also reinstated the “Mexico City” rule, which would eliminate federal funding for any non-governmental group that provides family planning

and abortion counseling abroad. Rep. Howard Berman (CA), the ranking Democrat on the committee, said the bill had a “Fortress America” tone and reflected the “decline of a bipartisan center that existed in the House in the past.” Conservative members would never have thought of pulling out of the OAS or capping funds for U.N. peacekeeping forces. (*Washington Post* 7/20/2011)

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ment of Health and Human Services adopts the recommendations outlined by IOM, the new guidelines would take a year to go into effect, ensuring that the new provisions would not be written into health insurance plans until at least January 2013.

While the Department of Health and Human Services assesses the recom-

mendations on preventive health, the assault on women’s reproductive health rights continues on the state level and in the U.S. Congress. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) reintroduced legislation that would require abortion providers in states without parental notification requirements to notify parents about abortion

procedures. In addition, the provision would make it a federal offense to transport minors across state lines for the purpose of evading an existing state parental notification law. While the bill in its previous form passed in both the House and Senate, it was never sent to the President’s desk for approval or veto. The current bill already has 82 cosponsors.