



Advocacy Update

Sent December 5, 2012

Reform Movement Speaks Out About Israel

In a new policy statement adopted by the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Reform leaders, including WRJ's president, executive director, and several past presidents, addressed the full array of issues flowing from the decision of the UN to upgrade the official status of the Palestinians. The statement "Condemn[s] the Palestinian Authority for the unilateral decision to seek upgraded status at the United Nation as counterproductive to the cause of peace, and express[es] ... deep concern to those countries that supported the upgraded status, and to those who abstained."

The resolution, which is available here, was supported by the Zionist arms of the Reform Movement – ARZA and ARZA Canada. WRJ's policy on Israel has long identified the "need for responsible dissent in the peace process," and believes strongly in a two-state solution achieved through peaceful means and active North American involvement

Abortion Access for Military Women

This week, the Senate is scheduled to vote on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), an annual bill that sets out much of the country's military policy for the upcoming year. This act contains many potentially contentious sections, including a debate over the transfer of detainees at Guantanamo to the United States for trial. The Senate version also includes a provision known as the Shaheen Amendment, which would help protect access to abortion for women in the military.

Under current health insurance regulations, servicewomen are not able to access abortion services if they were victims of rape or incest – a marked difference between other federal health insurance plans. This is particularly problematic given the extraordinarily and disproportionately high rates of sexual assault in the military: one in three servicewomen are victims of sexual assault, as compared to one in six civilian women. As the NDAA passes through the Senate and moves into conference committee where it will be reconciled with the House version (that does not include a comparable version of the Shaheen amendment), it will become crucial that we protect the Shaheen amendment's policies and give servicewomen access to the health services that they need and deserve.

Fiscal Cliff

On January 2, 2013, the "fiscal cliff" is expected to arrive, jolting our economy with drastic federal spending cuts coupled with cuts to essential safety net programs and the expiration of tax cuts. Services for vulnerable members of our society are particularly at risk, including crucial programs for women and families.

As Congress attempts to avoid this fiscal cliff, we must continue to support those programs that aid the poorest in our communities. Jewish tradition and values are explicit in its support of a safety net of programs serving the most vulnerable. We cannot rebuild our economy by slashing programs like SNAP (food stamps), Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act. As Congress considers paths toward deficit reduction, they must avoid further cuts to these vital programs.

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