

IN THE NEWS

U.S. favors Europe-Russia plan on Iran

The United States favors a plan that would allow Iran to use uranium enriched in a third country.

The point is "to get Iran back to the negotiating table, to come to an agreement whereby they are able to develop peaceful nuclear energy," U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Tuesday, as long as "Iran would not have access to those critical nuclear fuel cycle activities, i.e., enrichment or reprocessing, on their territory."

Ariel Sharon aide: No more land for peace

Ariel Sharon will no longer operate on the principle of "land for peace," but rather "independence for security," a top aide said.

The idea that Israeli land concessions would buy peace, which underpinned the Oslo peace process, has been proven mistaken, Eyal Arad told the Guardian newspaper.

Bush extends Syria sanctions

President Bush signed a bill that extends sanctions already in place against Iran to Syria as well.

The Iran Nonproliferation Amendments Act of 2005, signed Tuesday, significantly toughens existing law by enabling sanctions against third parties or countries that deal with Syria.

Bush may choose to suspend the provisions of the bill for now, but his administration has suggested in recent weeks that sanctions may be toughened because of Syria's failure to cooperate with a U.N. investigation into the murder of a former Lebanese prime minister and its support for terrorist groups.

REMINDER: The JTA World Report will not be published on Friday, Nov. 25.

WORLD REPORT

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Effort for review of anti-Semitism on campus meeting new resistance

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The effort by some Jewish groups to establish a government review procedure to address claims of anti-Israel bias and anti-Semitism on university campuses appears to be under threat just as it's making serious headway.

Buried in a massive budget bill passed recently by the Senate are two paragraphs with language stating that the U.S. Department of Education must not "mandate, direct, or control an institution of higher education's specific instructional content, curriculum, or program of instruction."

The inclusion suggests resistance among conservatives in Congress and elsewhere to reforms that Jewish groups say are needed to alleviate what they claim is a hostile environment toward Jewish students on some campuses.

The resistance came to the fore last Friday when three Jewish groups testified on the matter before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, encountering tough questions from the more conservative commissioners.

The Senate language, inserted in the Deficit Reduction Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 2005 and passed by the Senate on Nov. 3, would gut plans to make universities that receive federal funds accountable to the Education Department to the degree that some Jewish groups have sought.

"There should be something in there that requires a balance of viewpoints," said Susan Tuchman, director of the Center of

Law and Justice at the Zionist Organization of America, a group that has been lobbying hard for federal review of universities' Middle Eastern studies. "It's not enough to ensure that appropriate changes are made."

The American Jewish Congress, also a leader in the effort, has been fighting hard to remove exactly the same language from another bill making headway in both houses, said Sarah Stern, the AJCongress' director of governmental affairs.

Stern said the inclusion of the language in the deficit-reduction bill came "completely under the radar." Three other Jewish groups involved in pressing for the legislation said they only learned of the language in recent days, some because of JTA's questions.

At least one of the groups was still reviewing the legislation and wasn't ready to condemn it outright.

The American Jewish Committee said other provisions in the bill might meet the standards it has been seeking by giving the secretary of education some limited powers of review.

"It has always been our contention that those reforms would not allow the secretary to interfere with academic freedom or autonomy of institutions," said Richard Foltin, the AJCommittee's legislative director.

A U.S. House of Representatives version of the deficit-reduction bill that scraped through last Friday does not include the language, and Jewish groups were hoping it might disappear in the version that emerges

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**FOCUS
ON
ISSUE**

■ U.S. commission members are skeptical about monitoring universities for anti-Semitism

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in the House-Senate conference before Christmas break.

It's not clear which senator inserted the language during the lengthy process of composing a bill that deals mostly with budget cutting to offset the costs of war and hurricane recovery, but it would have had to pass Republican muster. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), the chairman of the Senate's Budget Committee, initiated the bill, and it passed 52-47, largely along party lines.

As Foltin noted, the bill does provide some redress. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings would be able to suspend federal funding for a university for 60 days if she deems a complaint serious enough, but after that she would be required to resume the funding whether or not the complaint has been resolved. She also would be authorized to take such complaints into account when renewing grants to universities.

Additionally, the bill suggests linking funding for universities to their success in creating a cadre of Middle East experts in government.

However, the language that keeps the education secretary from touching "specific instructional content, curriculum, or program of instruction" means that she wouldn't be able to require a university's Middle East studies department to balance a reliance on Arabists such as Edward Said with other historians with a more pro-Western tilt, such as Bernard Lewis.

Groups like AJCongress, ZOA and the Institute for Jewish and Community Research allege that anti-Western bias pervades American universities' Mideast studies departments. Other groups, including the Anti-Defamation League and the AJCommittee, agree that there is a problem but say progress is being made.

"Institutional anti-Semitism, discrimination and quotas against Jewish students are largely a thing of the past," the ADL said in written testimony to the Commission on Civil Rights.

Should the language survive the House-Senate conference, another bill promoting much tougher measures could fall by the wayside, Jewish lobbyists said. Legislators could argue that a solution is already on the books, so they don't need to pursue the matter further.

Jewish groups favor another bill that would establish an advisory committee to review complaints of bias, a measure that academic organizations say smacks of McCarthyism. That has passed a House committee but has yet to be considered by the full House, meaning the diluted version passed by the Senate on Nov. 3 is much further advanced.

Witnesses at the Civil Rights Commission hoped they would get a sympathetic ear for the proposed advisory committee. The commission has no enforcement powers, but its recommendations would have moral force in Washington.

Citing a litany of complaints from Jewish students across the country, Stern of the AJCongress, Tuchman of ZOA and Gary Tobin, president of the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, painted a picture of a pervasively hostile environment.

"Anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism are systemic ideologies in higher education," Tobin said.

Instead of the sympathy they expected, the witnesses got a sometimes-testy exchange on the role of government in policing campuses.

Significantly, the toughest questions

came from commissioners most closely associated with the Bush administration, which recently revamped the commission to more closely reflect its own conservative values.

"I am extremely nervous about administrative oversight on university campuses," said Abigail Thernstrom, the commission's vice chairwoman. "You do not want administrators waking into classrooms and deciding what a professor is teaching is acceptable or unacceptable."

Stern said such worries were unfounded. By mitigating bias, a federal advisory panel that would review complaints would encourage debate, not inhibit it, she said.

"Any intellectually honest person with integrity would say, 'Wait a minute, there is another side here,'" she said.

Tobin said the threat of withdrawing federal funding would be a last resort meant to spur universities into using tools already at their disposal — for instance, increasing the involvement of trustees in hiring and firing decisions.

"This truly is a nuclear option," he said of the proposed legislation.

The witnesses got a more sympathetic hearing from the two Democrats on the eight-person commission.

"Simply because something happens in the arena of a university does not qualify it as untouchable," said Michael Yaki, a San Francisco lawyer.

He also chided conservatives on the commission who suggested that only physical harassment was out of bounds, noting that the legal definition of sexual harassment includes its verbal forms.

The conservative commissioners were equally skeptical of a federal role in policing anti-Semitism on campus.

Thernstrom, who is Jewish, said posters that had appeared on campuses that depicted Israelis as baby-killers were appalling, but might be part of the necessary give-and-take of university life.

"I don't want universities to be comfortable places for students," she said. ■

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Abigail Thernstrom

Civil Rights Commission chairwoman

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Activists look to Jewish law on abortion

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When American Jews talk about the future of the U.S. Supreme Court, the discussion usually turns to the issue of abortion rights.

Nearly 33 years after the high court legalized abortion, the subject remains one of the most divisive in the country, and one of the most important to countless American Jewish activists.

Many who are watching the Supreme Court nomination fight this year are thinking about the effect conservative justices, including the newly installed Chief Justice John Roberts and nominee Judge Samuel Alito, will have on reproductive rights.

It remains unclear whether the legal right to an abortion will be debated in the Supreme Court in the near future. But the court is expected to weigh in on numerous cases involving access to abortion, including two that will be heard Nov. 30.

Jewish activists and leaders have been central to the pro-choice movement for decades, working both in Jewish organizations that support abortion rights and in various other public policy groups. Since Jewish law mandates that a pregnancy must be ended in cases where it is necessary to protect the mother's health, pro-choice groups have often sought out Jews to bring a religious perspective to their cause.

But while all religious streams agree on the Jewish view of abortion, they differ on how to translate it into public policy.

These differences, in turn, are reflected in the larger question of how much to get involved in the debate over supreme court nominees.

Many liberal Jews, believing decisions about abortion are personal, fight for greater access to abortion for those who choose it.

Orthodox groups believe abortion should remain legal, but only used in cases of protecting a woman's health.

Liberal Jewish groups say that outlawing abortion would strip Jews of their right to follow their religion. They use this as one counterargument to the

religious statements against abortion by conservative activists.

"If a faith group believes in full conscience that a fetus is a person, then they shouldn't have an abortion," said Rabbi Bonnie Margulis, director of clergy programming for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. "What we are against is not allowing us to make that choice."

The Religious Coalition, with nine Jewish signatories, used Jewish law as an argument in an amicus brief in one of the cases to be heard by the Supreme Court next week.

The case, *Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood of Northern New England*, challenges a New Hampshire law requiring parental notification for women under 18 to receive an abortion.

The Religious Coalition's brief specifically cites policies of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, noting that "Judaism chooses and requires abortion as an act which affirms and protects the life, well being and health of the mother."

It also says that "to deny a Jewish woman and her family the ability to obtain a safe, legal abortion when so mandated by Jewish tradition, is to deprive them of their fundamental right to religious freedom."

The second case to be heard on Nov. 30, *Scheidler v. National Organization for Women*, involves the free speech rights of abortion opponents. Lower courts have found that anti-abortion groups that use violence or threats are violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

But for liberal Jews, the argument for abortion rights goes beyond the religious realm.

"Everyone feels that abortion should be rare and it should be safe and it should

be accessible," said Phyllis Snyder, president of the National Council of Jewish Women. "The decisions of when a woman should have an abortion should be based on the circumstances and in consultation with her doctor."

The Orthodox Union has largely stayed out of the abortion-rights debate. The fervently Orthodox Agudath Israel of America has spoken out against

the increased access to abortion, while believing it should be legal in cases of a mother's health.

"At least there should be a message that abortion is not like choosing a brand of toothpaste," said Rabbi Avi Shafran, Agudah's director of public affairs. "The law is a teacher, and we believe it is currently teaching that fetal life is worthless. Judaism teaches that while fetal life is not equivalent to born life, it has worth."

But at the same time, Shafran said he believes abortion should remain legal, but only used as a last resort. He said he believes his position is in line with most Americans. Orthodox groups have not weighed in on the *Ayotte* case.

For many Jews, the abortion-rights cases now before the Supreme Court point to the larger issue of the future of the court.

Both the National Council and Union for Reform Judaism have announced their opposition to Alito, largely on his record on abortion rights. Alito wrote in a job application that he believed "the Constitution does not protect a right to an abortion."

Agudath Israel is expected to announce its support for Alito in upcoming weeks, JTA has learned.

Many other Jewish groups that back reproductive rights have not weighed in on Alito.

Those organizations say they have chosen not to enter the political fray of presidential confirmations.

'If a faith group believes in full conscience that a fetus is a person, then they shouldn't have an abortion. What we are against is not allowing us to make that choice.'

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

West Bank man killed

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian during a West Bank clash. The 22-year-old man was shot dead as soldiers raiding Jenin engaged in gunfights with Palestinians.

The army did not immediately comment on the incident, but said its forces captured three wanted Fatah terrorists in the area of nearby Nablus.

Protest for Pollard

Hundreds of Israelis demonstrated for the release of Jonathan Pollard. Linked by handcuffs, the protesters formed a human chain Wednesday between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's residence and the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem.

The rally was called to mark 20 years since Pollard, a U.S. Navy analyst, was arrested for spying on behalf of Israel.

Turk stowaways reach Israel

Six Turks turned up in Israel after stowing away on a Mediterranean cargo tanker.

The six men, all in their 20s, emerged from a cargo container aboard a ship that docked Wednesday in Haifa. They told police they had hoped to reach Italy. The stowaways were deported back to Turkey.

Sharons seen as corrupt

Israelis consider Ariel Sharon and his son to be among the most corrupt elected officials in the country, a poll found.

According to the study conducted for an economic conference in the southern town of Sderot this week, Israelis named the prime minister as the *fifth-most corrupt Cabinet member*, and his son Omri Sharon as the *most corrupt lawmaker*.

Omri Sharon recently pleaded guilty to illicitly financing his father's 1999 run for the Likud leadership.

Chief rabbi's son pleads guilty

The son of Israel's chief Sephardi rabbi pleaded guilty to beating his sister's friend. The prosecution recommended that Meir Amar, son of Shlomo Amar, receive a three-year jail sentence after he pled guilty Wednesday.

Leaflets over Lebanon

Israeli warplanes dropped leaflets over Lebanon blaming Hezbollah for a recent cross-border attack. "To the citizens of Lebanon: Who is the 'protector' of Lebanon? Who lies to you? Who sends your sons into battle unprepared? Who strives to return to destruction and ruin? Who is an instrument in the hands of Syria and Iran? Hezbollah is detrimental to Lebanon!" read an Arabic message on thousands of leaflets dropped over Beirut on Wednesday.

The leaflets were referring to a clash earlier this week on the Lebanese border which began when Hezbollah gunmen tried to kidnap Israeli soldiers. Four Hezbollah members were killed and 11 Israeli soldiers were wounded.

Hamas talks tough

Hamas said that at the end of the year it would not consider itself bound by a "truce" declared by Palestinian terrorist groups last winter.

"The group will not be committed to any agreement until we reach a new agreement after the parliament election," Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said Wednesday, referring to a Palestinian Authority poll scheduled for Jan. 25.

NORTH AMERICA

Jacko: Jews are 'leeches'

The Anti-Defamation League accused Michael Jackson of having an "anti-Semitic streak" after he called Jews "leeches" in a voicemail message. In tapes aired Tuesday on ABC's "Good Morning America" program, the singer says Jews "suck" and that "it is a conspiracy. The Jews do it on purpose." The ADL blasted the statements.

Survivor, rescuer to be reunited

A Holocaust survivor and the Polish woman who saved her will be reunited after Thanksgiving. The rescuer, Joanna Zalucka, will arrive in New York from Poland on Friday to be reunited with Ruth Gruener after 61 years.

Gruener lived with Zalucka's family for three years during the Holocaust. The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous is sponsoring the reunion.

King David tapestry to be auctioned

A tapestry cover from King David's Tomb in Jerusalem will be auctioned in New York. The ceremonial aubusson tapestry that covered the sarcophagus in the Jerusalem tomb will go on auction Dec. 14 along with other items in New York City.

Proceeds from the auction will go to the Mount Zion Foundation, an archaeological project in Jerusalem, and the Diaspora Yeshiva.

Campuses team up against terror

Israeli and American universities plan to cooperate on national-security issues. Under the deal announced Wednesday, the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya and Syracuse University in New York will develop joint study and research programs in counter-terrorism and homeland security.

WORLD

Argentine groups condemn hate link

Argentine Jewish groups criticized extremist Catholics for shouting anti-Semitic epithets and pummeling people at a gay pride parade. The weekend attack is the latest in a series of incidents involving a little-known nationalist Catholic group that is becoming increasingly violent, taking Jews, gays and women's organizations as their main targets.

Holocaust DVD distributed in Paris

The city of Paris and the Foundation for Shoah Remembrance are distributing a Holocaust DVD. According to the daily newspaper *Le Parisien*, the two institutions are distributing a DVD to 28,000 high school students, teachers and libraries in the Paris area on the deportations of 76,000 French Jews and the liberation of the concentration camps.

Israeli films screened in Russia

The organizers of the Fourth Israeli Film Festival in Russia want to give audiences a deeper understanding of Israeli life. The five Israeli features being screened this month offer a glimpse into topics such as the life and traditions of the Israeli Druse and Tel Aviv's criminal underworld.

Touro College to have Rome branch

A U.S. Jewish college opened a campus in Italy. Under an agreement signed recently, Touro College will have a branch just outside Rome that it hopes will become an international center for Jewish and general studies.