



58 Senators Call on President Bush to Expand Policy That
Limits Federal Funding of Embryonic Stem Cell Research
June 7, 2004

Washington, DC – Fifty-eight U.S. Senators have written a letter to President George W. Bush calling on him to change our nation’s policy on federal funding for scientific research on embryonic stem cells, which may hold the potential for cures to some of the most deadly and debilitating diseases – including Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, diabetes, cancer and multiple sclerosis.

“This issue is especially poignant given President Reagan’s passing,” Senator Feinstein said. **“Embryonic stem cell research might hold the key to a cure for Alzheimer’s and other terrible diseases. This is why we must do everything in our power to support this research and give hope to the millions of Americans who suffer today.”**

The letter was originated by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Arlen Specter (R-PA), and Tom Harkin (D-IA), the authors of legislation to ban human reproductive cloning, but allow nuclear transplantation research to continue under strict federal guidelines. A summary of the legislation is attached.

This legislation establishes a clear divide between nuclear transplantation research, used only to produce embryonic stem cells - and human reproductive cloning, which is unethical and immoral and should never be allowed. Embryonic stem cell research has the potential to save millions of lives -- and improve the quality of life for millions more.

In the summer of 2001, President Bush announced a policy that limits federal funding for research on stem cell lines derived by August 9, 2001. While it originally appeared that 78 lines would be available for research under the policy, only 19 lines are now available to researchers, and these lines may not be suitable for therapeutic use for humans.

The text of the Senators’ letter follows:

June 4, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to expand the current federal policy concerning embryonic stem cell research.

As you know, embryonic stem cells have the potential to be used to treat and better understand deadly and disabling diseases and conditions that affect more than 100 million Americans, such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, and many others.

Embryonic stem cells can be derived from in vitro fertilized (IVF) embryos that are developed in excess of those needed for the procedure used to enable infertile couples to have children. The IVF process results in more embryos than are needed by the couple. There are estimated to be more than 400,000 IVF embryos, which are currently frozen and will likely be destroyed if not donated, with informed consent of the couple, for research.

We very much appreciate your words of support for the enormous potential of this research, and we know that you intended your policy to help promote this research to its fullest. As you know, the Administration's policy limits federal funding only to embryonic stem cells that were derived by August 9, 2001, the date of the policy announcement.

However, scientists have told us that since the policy went into effect more than two years ago, we have learned that the embryonic stem cell lines eligible for federal funding will not be suitable to effectively promote this research. We therefore feel it is essential to relax the restrictions in the current policy for this research to be fully explored.

Among the difficult challenges with the current policy are the following:

- While it originally appeared that 78 embryonic stem cell lines would be available for research under the federal policy, now, more than two years after August 9, 2001, only 19 are available to researchers.
- All available stem cell lines are contaminated with mouse feeder cells, making their therapeutic use for humans uncertain.
- Scientists are reporting that it is increasingly difficult to attract new scientists to this area of research because of concerns that funding restrictions will keep this research from being successful.
- Despite the fact that U.S. scientists were the first to derive human embryonic stem cells, leadership in this area of research is shifting to other countries such as the United Kingdom, Singapore, South Korea, and Australia.

Mr. President, we know that you have been a strong supporter of medical research and share our commitment to curing disease and alleviating human suffering. We would very much like to work with you to modify the current embryonic stem cell policy so that it provides this area of research the greatest opportunity to lead to the treatments and cures for which we are all hoping.

Sincerely,

Daniel Akaka
Lamar Alexander
Max Baucus
Evan Bayh
Joseph Biden
Jeff Bingaman
Barbara Boxer
Robert Byrd
Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Maria Cantwell
Thomas Carper
Lincoln Chafee
Hillary Clinton
Thad Cochran
Susan Collins
Jon Corzine
Tom Daschle
Mark Dayton
Christopher Dodd
Byron Dorgan

Richard Durbin
John Edwards
Russell Feingold
Dianne Feinstein
Bob Graham
Tom Harkin
Orrin Hatch
Ernest Hollings
Kay Bailey Hutchison
Daniel Inouye
James Jeffords
Tim Johnson
Edward Kennedy
John Kerry
Herb Kohl
Mary Landrieu
Frank Lautenberg
Patrick Leahy
Carl Levin
Joseph Lieberman

Blanche Lincoln
Trent Lott
John McCain
Barbara Mikulski
Patty Murray
Bill Nelson
Jack Reed
Harry Reid
Jay Rockefeller
Paul Sarbanes
Charles Schumer
Gordon Smith
Olympia Snowe
Arlen Specter
Debbie Stabenow
Ted Stevens
John Warner
Ron Wyden

Summary of the legislation to ban human reproductive cloning and allow nuclear transplantation research to continue:

- Impose a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison for anyone even attempting to clone a human being, and establish a minimum civil penalty of \$1 million or three times the gross profits resulting from the violation, whichever is greater;
- Mandate that eggs used in this research be unfertilized;
- Prohibit the purchase or sale of unfertilized eggs - to prevent "embryo farms" or the possible exploitation of women.
- Impose strong ethics rules on scientists, mandating informed consent by egg donors; review of any nuclear transplantation research by an ethics board; and include safety and privacy protections.
- Prohibit any research on an egg cell after 14 days -- when that cell begins to divide and when cell differentiation begins.
- Require that all egg donations be voluntary, and that women who donate eggs are compensated minimally.
- Require that nuclear transplantation occur in labs completely separate from labs that engage in *in vitro* fertilization.
- Prohibit the export of eggs that have undergone nuclear transplantation to any foreign country

that does not ban human cloning.

- Any researcher who violates the bill's ethics requirements (even without attempting to clone a human) will face civil penalties of up to \$250,000 per violation.

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