



Statement by Senator Feinstein Urging Senate Vote on Stem Cells
July 28, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged Senate passage of legislation already approved by the House of Representatives, which would expand the number of embryonic stem cell lines eligible for federal funding and offer new hope to millions of Americans suffering from catastrophic diseases.

Senator Feinstein also criticized the Republican Senate leadership for refusing to bring the bill to the floor: **“Unfortunately the Republican majority is preventing a vote on major stem cell research legislation. This is a tragedy for millions of Americans suffering from catastrophic and debilitating diseases for which stem cell research holds great help. It is a real setback which can only be overcome if Americans rise up and demand that the Senate act.”**

The following is a floor statement by Senator Feinstein on the issue:

“Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the unanimous consent request offered today by Senator Reid. The Senator has asked unanimous consent for the Senate to take up HR. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act and S. 1317, the Bone Marrow and Cord Blood Therapy and Research Act. Both of these bills have been passed by the House and are sitting at the desk waiting to be passed by the Senate and sent to the President for his signature.

The month of July has come and is nearly gone. Yet these two House-passed bills, with strong bipartisan support, sit and wait at the desk.

The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act has 41 sponsors – Republicans and Democrats alike. This legislation is the result of many years of bipartisan cooperation in both the House and Senate. I am pleased to join my colleagues Senator Arlen Specter, Tom Harkin, Orrin Hatch, Ted Kennedy and Gordon Smith who have worked tirelessly on behalf of patients and their families across this nation to see that embryonic stem cell research moves forward.

This legislation is proof positive that Senators from many different points of view, be they liberal or conservative, pro-life or pro-choice, can work together on legislation that will help speed the pace of cures and treatments for more than 110 million Americans.

Identical legislation passed the House on May 24 by a vote of 238 to 194. Congressman Mike Castle (R-De) and Diana DeGette (D-Co) are to be commended for their tireless work in getting this bill passed in the House.

It is essential that the Senate move quickly to pass this bill. The clock is ticking. August 9 marks the fourth anniversary of President Bush’s policy limiting federal funding for embryonic

stem cell research. At the time it was thought there were 78 stem cell lines available to researchers, today that number is 22. And all 22 of the lines available are contaminated by mouse feeder cells and not usable for research in humans.

So why has the Senate still not acted? The simple unanimous consent request put forth by Senator Reid would allow the Senate to vote on this bill as early as today. We could send it to the President for his signature tonight.

What is going on here is an attempt to obscure what is a very simple issue. What is going on here is an attempt to allow votes on other bills in order to pull votes away from HR. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act.

I think it is appropriate for the Senate to debate other related issues at a later time. In fact, yesterday I introduced S. 1520, the Human Cloning Ban Act – with 25 bipartisan cosponsors - which would prohibit once and for all the immoral and unethical act of human reproductive cloning. I believe strongly that Congress must pass a prohibition on human cloning or attempts to clone human beings.

But first we must act on the unanimous consent request offered today by Senator Reid, and I hope that request will be one of the first issues the Senate deals with after the August recess.

Embryonic stem cell research is the bright new frontier of medicine. We owe it to the 110 million Americans suffering daily with debilitating and catastrophic diseases to pass HR. 810.”