

Castle Back from Biomedical Research Fact Finding Trip to U.K. -- June 2, 2006

Says U.S. at serious risk of falling behind of regulations, ethical construct are not in place to allow stem cell research to move forward

Wilmington, DE -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, Co-Chair of the House Diabetes Caucus and the Congressional Biomedical Research Caucus, today recapped his trip to the United Kingdom in which he had a series of meetings with medical investigators regarding embryonic stem cell research and diabetes research. Congressman Castle stressed the need for regulation and oversight in the United States, which his legislation, H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, would establish at the National Institute of Health (NIH).

"My trip to the United Kingdom was invaluable for the lessons I learned of what we should be doing here in the United States to advance embryonic stem cell research. We need to have tight regulation and ethical oversight like the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority in Britain to establish a clear line of what is permitted and what is prohibited. It is important that we know what scientists are working on and the various projects to improve coordination throughout the country. We need to establish a stem cell bank and finally, it is necessary to ensure that those reviewing applications for stem cell use are making objective decisions, not political ones. H.R. 810 gives the power to the NIH to do all of these things and to ensure strict informed consent for embryo donation and that is why it is so important that action takes place on this legislation in the Senate as soon as possible," Castle said.

Castle also outlined the following ideas for the comprehensive advancement of stem cell research in the United States (based on lessons learned on his trip):

- Implement plan to invest in researchers to prevent brain drain.
- Implement plan to invest funding in all types of stem cell research. (He noted that the United Kingdom currently invests 50 million pounds.)
- Implement plan to invest in infrastructure, such as building centers for excellence.
- Coordinate all research, so that it's not conducted on a state-by-state basis.
- Establish partnerships with the biomedical and pharmaceutical industries.
- Create competition to draw out the most talented researchers and brightest ideas.

H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act just celebrated the one-year anniversary of its passage in the House of Representatives on May 24, 2006.