

Castle: House Must Swiftly Pass Stem Cell Bill & Send to President -- April 11, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, co-author of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, which passed the House of Representatives in January, today praised Senate passage of similar legislation and urged the House Leadership to bring this revised legislation to the floor immediately.

"Passage of this legislation today only confirms what I already know to be true -- the majority of Congress and the majority of the American people back ethical stem cell research. It is my hope that this newly revised bill, which includes funding research into alternative sources of derivation as well, will be passed swiftly by the House," Castle said.

"I urge the President to review his statements from last summer, where he expressed support for alternative forms of derivation. I also urge him to listen to his chief medical adviser, Dr. Elias Zerhouni who said science and the nation would be better served if our scientists have access to more stem cell lines. This policy was crafted almost 6 years ago and it is clearly not working. Our legislation imposes even greater ethical constraints than the current policy, while allowing our researchers access to the estimated 400 new stem cell lines that have been created since 2001. Please do not deny hope to the one in three Americans who are suffering from devastating diseases."

The base bill, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct and support research that utilizes human embryonic stem cells if the following ethical requirements are met (regardless of the date on which the stem cells were derived from a human embryo):

(1) The stem cells were derived from human embryos that have been donated from in vitro fertilization clinics, were created for the purposes of fertility treatment, and were in excess of the clinical need of the individuals seeking such treatment.

(2) Prior to the consideration of embryo donation and through consultation with the individuals seeking fertility treatment, it was determined that the embryos would never be implanted in a woman and would otherwise be discarded.

(3) The individuals seeking fertility treatment donated the embryos with written informed consent and without receiving any financial or other inducements to make the donation.

Additionally, the bill will require the Secretary to conduct and support basic and applied research to develop techniques for the isolation, derivation, production, or testing of stem cells that, like embryonic stem cells, are capable of producing all or almost all of the cell types of the developing body and may result in improved understanding of or treatments for diseases and other adverse health conditions, but are not derived from a human embryo.

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