

The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, H.R.810, S.471

Let's Keep Politics Out of Science

Christopher Reeve strongly supported embryonic stem cell research and the *Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act*, H.R.810. He believed in the potential of this research not for his own benefit, but for the millions of Americans who could live better lives through the advancement of medical research. After an impassioned grassroots campaign including the Christopher Reeve Action Network and other patient and research advocacy groups around the country, on May 24th, 2005, H.R. 810 passed the U.S. House of Representatives with strong bi-partisan support of 238 Congressmen and women. We sincerely appreciate the positive vote of our Congressional champions. Now, it is imperative that the U.S. Senate vote this year to allow important biomedical research to move forward. The Christopher Reeve Foundation requests a Senate vote on H.R.810 with no amendments and no alternatives before the 2006 Memorial Day recess.

H.R. 810 will expand the current Federal policy allowing researchers to use embryonic stem cells derived after August 9th, 2001, and will establish federal guidelines to ensure that embryonic stem cell research moves forward in a safe and ethical manner. The bill specifies strict ethical guidelines – the stem cells may only be derived from IVF-created embryos. After the couple seeking fertility treatment has decided that they will no longer use the embryos to have children nor do they want to put the embryos up for adoption, *and* the embryos will otherwise be discarded, the couple then has the option of donating their embryos. The couple must provide written informed consent, and would not receive any compensation.

Science has simply moved beyond President Bush's current policy. In August 2001, at the time of his policy announcement, President Bush believed there were over 60 stem cell lines available for research. Currently, it is estimated that there are less than 22 approved lines in existence and those lines are contaminated with mouse feeder cells, rendering their use in research to produce treatments or a cure very limited.

The Christopher Reeve Foundation along with the American public wants this important research to go forward. A Harris poll taken in August 2004 found that 73% of Americans believe stem cell research should be allowed. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist also supports embryonic stem cell research and announced in July 2005 that he will vote to allow cell lines derived under the ethical framework in H.R.810 to be available for federal funding.

Congressional action is necessary because federal funding allows coordinated federal oversight. With the passage of H.R.810, Congress ensures that all federally funded embryonic stem cell research is safe and ethical. This legislation requires the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to report to Congress regarding the details of research conducted on an annual basis. This research should not be regulated by a patchwork of state laws or relegated to the for-profit, commercial sector.

Christopher Reeve imagined living in a world where politics would never get in the way of hope. Please support a Senate vote on H.R.810 as passed in the House of Representatives to expand the current federal policy on embryonic stem cell research and give our nation's scientists and researchers the resources they need to fully explore this promising research and provide hope to patients everywhere.