



Schwarzenegger, Feinstein United to Protect California's
Stem Cell Research Initiative from Threat in Washington
August 23, 2005

Los Angeles – In light of a new threat to California's landmark embryonic stem cell research initiative, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, joined with patients, advocates and scientists, today to call for passage of legislation that would ban human reproductive cloning without harming vital research.

They were joined at a news conference by Robert Klein, Chairman of the Independent Citizen's Oversight Committee for the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, Dr. Paul Berg, a Nobel Laureate and Professor Emeritus at Stanford University, and Candace Coffee, a Devic's Syndrome patient (a form of Multiple Sclerosis), UCLA graduate student, and former Miss Bakersfield.

“The people of California recognize the promise of stem cell research and believe we as a state should pursue it to its fullest potential in our effort to cure dreaded diseases. By passing the Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative, California said to the world's scientific elite and aspiring students that, in California, you will find the resources and the freedom to expand the frontiers of science,” said Governor Schwarzenegger. **“Today I ask Washington, DC to pass Senator Feinstein's legislation to adopt a strong national ethical standard on human reproductive cloning that does not jeopardize the full promise of stem cell research. California has been a leader in scientific research and technological innovation for decades, we need Washington to allow us the continued scientific freedom to bring hope to the millions of people who suffer from spinal cord injuries, Diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other illnesses.”**

“Embryonic stem cell research offers enormous promise to conquering many devastating and catastrophic diseases,” Senator Feinstein said. **“California is leading the way, but unfortunately this research will be stopped in its tracks if some in Washington get their way. That is why I am so pleased to report that California is united behind keeping all avenues of research open to scientists.”**

“Stem cell research holds promise for over 100 million Americans who are suffering from chronic and life-threatening diseases,” U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said. **“In California, we have recognized that current federal policy is a roadblock to progress in stem cell research. I would like to thank Senator Feinstein for her leadership on this important issue.”**

“Stem cell research will be the key to unlocking the mysteries of illnesses that have afflicted our friends and families for generations,” said Mayor Villaraigosa. **“We need Washington to stop playing politics that could impact California's efforts to lead the nation in life saving research. We stand united in California urging Congress to pass Senator Feinstein's legislation adopting strong ethical standards while pushing forward on sensible research.”**

Specifically, they called for the United States Senate to pass H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005, which was passed by the House of Representatives earlier this year, and S. 1520, legislation sponsored by Senator Feinstein and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) that would ban human reproductive cloning, but allow promising embryonic stem cell research to go forward.

They also urged the Senate to oppose legislation sponsored by Senators Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) and Mary Landrieu (D-La.) that bans a specific area of stem cell research. This legislation poses a grave threat to California's landmark embryonic stem cell research initiative and could significantly halt research funded by Proposition 71.

“I applaud Senator Feinstein and Governor Schwarzenegger who are part of the growing bipartisan coalition of leaders determined to give hope to patients and families suffering from chronic disease and injury,” Klein said. **“However, the Brownback bill in the United States Senate would prohibit a technique that allows critical patient-specific stem cell research. If passed, this would have overwhelming and devastating consequences to the advancement of medical science here in California and around the world, severely harming our research funding program in California and undermining the basic right of families in this country to gain access to ethical therapies to help their loved ones. We owe it to the future of California and the nation to follow the vision of hope for patients.”**

Background

On May 24, 2005 the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation (H.R. 810) sponsored by Representatives Mike Castle (R-Del.) and Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) that would allow federal funding for stem cell research using stem cell lines derived under strict ethical requirements from excess in vitro fertilization embryos, regardless of the date they were derived.

The Brownback-Landrieu legislation now pending in the U.S. Senate could halt the work of California's landmark research institute if it is enacted. This legislation (S. 658) would make cloning a human being illegal, but it would also ban a promising field of embryonic stem cell research vital for developing disease-specific therapies, understanding the origins of disease, and reducing risks in human clinical trials. Human cloning is already banned in California.

The Feinstein-Hatch legislation (S. 1520) would ban human reproductive cloning but would allow embryonic stem cell research to go forward.

Since the state's passage of Proposition 71, California has led the nation in efforts by states to fund embryonic stem cell research. This landmark initiative passed with approximately 7 million votes, or 59.1% on November 2, 2004. It authorizes \$3 billion in state tax-exempt bonds to be allocated incrementally over 10 years for California-based stem cell research at leading universities and research institutions and created the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine to fund and oversee all research.

President George W. Bush's policy on embryonic stem cell research, announced on August 9, 2001, originally identified and provided the first federal funding for 78 stem-cell lines that were already in existence. Today we know that only 22 are available, but all 22 are contaminated by mouse feeder-cells.

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