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May 4, 2006

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**FLOOR STATEMENT BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON STEM CELLS**

**(As prepared for delivery)**

Today I come to the Senate floor to speak briefly about stem cell research and the hope it holds for millions of Americans in the years ahead.

Hope is one of the qualities of spirit that make us human. Hope allows us to dream of a better life for our children, our community, and our world – especially for loved ones now suffering or in pain.

Hope is what stem cell research holds for the parents of children with diabetes, who dream of a day when their constant fears for their children's well-being are things of the past.

Hope is what stem cell research brings to those with Parkinson's Disease, who think of the time when the tremors of that disease are banished forever.

Hope is what stem cell research brings to millions of Americans who seek better treatments and better drugs for cancer, diabetes, spinal injury, and many other serious conditions.

Hope cannot be extinguished or destroyed – but it can be frozen. And it has now been frozen for five long years – ever since President Bush shut down the stem cell research program begun in the Clinton Administration, and imposed arbitrary and unwarranted restrictions on this life-saving research, based on ideology, instead of science.

For five years, we have watched as America has abdicated its global leadership in this important new field, by keeping our best scientists on the sidelines.

In those five years, we've squandered the opportunity to set strong ethical guidelines for this research through the oversight that NIH funding can bring. Through NIH, we have made progress consistent with our values in new fields of inquiry, such as recombinant DNA research, which once also seemed strange and controversial. We can do the same for stem cell research – but only if NIH is allowed to become a leader in this new field.

Hope soared anew a year ago, when the House of Representatives set aside partisan differences and courageously approved legislation to end those restrictions, and give our scientists the tools they need to make progress in the fight against disease.

The same strong bipartisan support exists in the Senate for ending the unwarranted restrictions on stem cell research.

There is no-one in the Senate with stronger pro-life credentials than Senator Hatch – but he knows that supporting stem cell research is the pro-life position to take.

There is no greater supporter of medical research in the Senate than Senator Specter – and he feels strongly that stem cell research is one of the great breakthroughs of modern medicine.

There is no-one with a greater depth of conscience than Senator Smith – and he has searched his heart and prayerfully decided that support for stem cell research is the moral choice.

Bipartisan legislation was passed by a vote of 238 to 194 in the House of Representatives on May 24, 2005, a year ago this month. It was ordered placed on the Senate calendar on June 6, where it has remained stalled ever since. If the House bill was put to a Senate vote today, or tomorrow, or next week, it would pass by a solid bipartisan majority in the Senate too.

Why? Because the Republican Senate leadership stands in the way. Summer came and went with no action in the Senate, then the winter, then the spring, and now we are about to reach an anniversary none of us ever wanted to see. On May 24th, it will be one year since the House acted, and the Senate still refuses to act.

Let us vow that we will not mark this anniversary with yet more inaction and indifference.

The Senate has had a busy schedule – but in that schedule we have found time for all manner of giveaways to those who already have much in the way of wealth and power.

Now, it is time to turn our attention to those who need our help the most. And that includes the millions of Americans who have seen their hopes blocked by the Administration's cruel policies and the Senate's shameful inaction.

The Senate leadership has scheduled a "Health Week" for later this month. Will we use this opportunity to debate the flawed Medicare drug program? Or the searing number of the uninsured? Will we do what we need to do to unlock the vast potential of stem cell research? Sadly, the answer to each of these questions is probably no. These and many other major priorities for the nation will remain unaddressed.

I urge my colleagues to join me in asking the Senate leadership to schedule a vote on HR 810, the House-passed stem cell research bill, during the coming "Health Week"—and to do so before May 24th, the first year anniversary of its approval by the House of Representatives.

Millions of patients and their families look with hope to stem cell research, and they should not have to tolerate any greater delay or any further failures.

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