

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Laura Capps/Melissa Wagoner
(202) 224-2633

KENNEDY, COLLEAGUES CALL ON FRIST TO TAKE UP STEM CELL LEGISLATION

HOUSE-PASSED, BIPARTISAN BILL HAS STALLED IN SENATE FOR NEARLY A YEAR

Washington, D.C.— Today Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democratic Leader Harry Reid and Senators Tom Harkin and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) called upon Majority Leader Bill Frist to immediately take up the *Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act* (H.R. 810) in the Senate for a vote.

The legislation—designed to expand federal funding for stem cell research—passed the House of Representatives with a broad bipartisan majority on May 24, 2005. Despite bipartisan support for the measure in the Senate, the bill has never been allowed to come to the floor for a vote. The Senators released a letter signed by over 40 members of the Democratic caucus urging Frist to bring the bill up during his “Health Week” next week.

“The dreams of millions of patients for a better life have been denied by the Bush Administration’s needless restrictions on stem cell research,” Senator Kennedy said. “We call on the Senate leadership, in the name of the millions of patients who cannot be here to speak for themselves, to schedule a vote on the House-passed bill on stem cell research. We’re here today to say, “The time for delay is over!”

The bipartisan *Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act* 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.

Below is the text of the letter signed by over 40 Democrats as well as Senator Kennedy’s prepared remarks at the press event and his prepared floor remarks delivered today.

**REMARKS OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
STEM CELL PRESS CONFERENCE
(As prepared for delivery)
MAY 4, 2006**

It’s an honor to join my Senate colleagues, and I commend their leadership on this very important issue of medical research.

America is a nation founded on hope and the constant quest for a better tomorrow.

Scientific discovery has always been a central part of that quest. Scientific miracles have improved countless lives over the years, and it makes no sense to erect ideological roadblocks to the miracles of the future.

In this new century, the new frontier of discovery is the life sciences, and no aspect of those sciences has greater promise than stem cell research. Physicians can use stem cells to find new ways to deliver insulin to patients with diabetes, new methods to calm the tremors of Parkinson’s Disease,

and new therapies to reverse the paralysis of spinal injury.

But the dreams of millions of patients for a better life have been denied by the Bush Administration's needless restrictions on stem cell research.

In a triumph of principle over politics, the House of Representatives rejected those restrictions, and voted to approve bipartisan legislation to free this research from the shackles of ideology.

That vote was almost a year ago, on May 24, 2005.

The bill would have passed by a wide margin if put to a vote in the Senate, but the Senate leadership refused to allow a vote. They found time for tax breaks for the wealthy and for all kinds of favors for special interests at the expense of working families. But month after month, in all those hours of debate, they couldn't find a way to bring hope and help to the millions of patients and their families who could benefit from this highly promising research.

We're here today to say, "The time for delay is over!"

We call on the Senate leadership, in the name of the millions of patients who cannot be here to speak for themselves, to schedule a vote on the House-passed bill on stem cell research .

The Senate is about to have a "Health Week". It would be a travesty to let that week go by without a vote on stem cell research.

We appeal to the humanitarian side of the Republican Senate leader—surely he understands the basic principle, "First, do no harm." We say, "Dr. Frist, let us vote on stem cell research."

May 4, 2006

The Honorable William Frist, M.D. Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Dr. Frist:

Nearly a year ago, the House of Representatives approved important legislation to end the restrictions that have kept stem cell research from fulfilling its potential to save lives and alleviate suffering. We understand that you are planning a week of Senate debate on legislation related to health. We urge you to bring the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005 (H.R. 810) to the Senate floor for consideration during this "Health Week".

Stem cell research has vast potential for curing diseases and saving lives. We know you recognize the enormous potential of this research for discovering new cures and therapies for diseases such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease and spinal cord injuries, and we commend the strong support you have expressed for approval of the Housepassed bill. By allowing H.R. 810 to be brought to a vote, you can bring hope and help to millions of American patients and families suffering from these and other

serious illnesses.

The House passed H.R. 810 in May 2005 - yet the Senate has failed to take action for nearly a year. Further delay will mean more lost opportunities for new cures and new treatments. The Senate should not mark the anniversary of the House vote with action not more inaction. We therefore urge you to bring H.R. 810 to the Senate floor for debate and a vote during "Health Week". Millions of patients and their families across the nation cannot afford to wait any longer for enactment of this urgently needed legislation.

Sincerely,

Harry Reid
Tom Harkin
Dianne Feinstein
Ted Kennedy
Daniel Akaka
Max Baucus
Evan Bayh
Joe Biden
Jeff Bingaman
Barbara Boxer
Maria Cantwell
Tom Carper
Hillary Rodham Clinton
Mark Dayton
Christopher Dodd
Byron Dorgan
Dick Durbin
Russell Feingold
Daniel Inouye
Jim Jeffords
Tim Johnson
John Kerry
Herb Kohl
Mary Landrieu
Frank Lautenberg
Patrick Leahy
Carl Levin
Joe Lieberman
Blanche Lincoln
Robert Menendez
Barbara Mikulski
Patty Murray
Bill Nelson
Barack Obama
Jack Reed
Ken Salazar
Paul Sarbanes
Charles Schumer
Debbie Stabenow

Ron Wyden

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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