

(January 11, 2007) Congressman Lipinski Statement During Stem Cell Debate

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Floor of the House of Representatives

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Mr. Speaker. I thank the gentlelady from Colorado for yielding, though today I rise in opposition to H.R. 3. No one likes to see another human suffer or struggle, and this bill intends to provide hope for help. I can personally appreciate hope because I have juvenile diabetes. I take a minimum of four shots a day and draw blood at least five times a day. But the bigger struggle is steering myself through the shoals of high and low blood sugar levels, and dealing with the very serious short-term and long-term consequences of both. I want a cure for diabetes and for many other far more devastating diseases, but I don't believe this bill is the way to get there.

I sit on the Science Committee because I believe scientific research is key to a better future, especially in medicine. Specifically on stem cells, last year I helped introduce and get signed into law the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act, a bill that provides for collecting and researching human cord blood stem cells. Just this week it was reported that Hope Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn in my district cured a girl suffering from leukemia using cord blood cells.

I am a cosponsor of the Alternative Pluripotent Stem Cell Therapies Enhancement Act that recognizes that there are many forms of stem cells that offer great scientific promise. Just this week we have been shown that amniotic stem cells are pluripotent, and this feature gives them the same advantage as sought in embryonic stem cells. But amniotic cells avoid not only the ethical pitfalls of embryonic cells, they also have been shown to be much better because they do not tend to produce tumors like embryonic stem cells do.

This is all in addition to adult stem cells that are being used today in clinical trials and in clinical practice to treat 72 diseases including Parkinson's, spinal cord injury, juvenile diabetes, brain cancer, breast cancer, lymphoma, heart damage, rheumatoid arthritis, stroke, and sickle cell anemia.

It is also important to remember that embryonic stem cell research is NOT outlawed in the United States; no one's right to do research is being restricted.

Yes, I want to be cured of diabetes, and I want to see cures for more debilitating illnesses. but science continues to demonstrate that we do not have to choose between advancing medical techniques and contentious life issues. It has been proven that we can achieve the scientific and medical advances that would benefit so many Americans through stem cell research that does not destroy human embryos. I urge this body to reevaluate the stem cell debate, and consider alternatives to embryonic stem cell research, and defeat this bill.