

(July 30, 2007) Reps. Ford, Lipinski Introduce Legislation To Encourage Creation of Pluripotent Stem

Reps. Ford, Lipinski Introduce Legislation To Encourage Creation of Pluripotent Stem Cell Lines That Do Not Destroy Human Embryos

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Reps. J. Randy Forbes (R-Va.) and Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.) last week introduced a measure (HR 2807) that would encourage creation of pluripotent stem cell lines, which have the ability to develop into any type of tissue "without the creation of human embryos, or the destruction or discarding of human embryos," CQ HealthBeat reports. The measure also would aim to increase stem cell research and promote human clinical trials using stem cells that were "obtained ethically and show evidence of providing near-term clinical benefit" (Scheuer, CQ HealthBeat, 7/27).

Lipinski in a release said the measure "ensures that finding cures for diabetes and other more devastating diseases is correctly prioritized, while proving that we don't have to choose between advancing medical techniques and contentious life issues" (Lipinski release, 7/26).

Washington Post Examines Effect of Bush Stem Cell Policy on New Research

In related news, the Washington Post on Sunday examined the effect of the Bush administration's stem cell policy on researchers' efforts to create embryonic stem cells without destroying embryos (Weiss, Washington Post, 7/29). Federal funding for embryonic stem cell research currently is allowed only for research using embryonic stem cell lines created on or before Aug. 9, 2001, under a policy announced by President Bush on that date (Kaiser Daily Women's Health Policy Report, 7/10).

According to the Post, since Bush's policy was announced, researchers have developed embryonic stem cell lines without destroying human embryos but have been unable to receive federal research grants because the lines were created after Aug. 9, 2001.

Bush last month issued an executive order instructing NIH to rewrite the rules for funding stem cell research, emphasizing whether embryos were harmed instead of whether the stem cells are derived from embryos, the Post reports. The order also bans federal funding of research that causes more than a "minimal" risk to an embryo, but greater risk is permitted if the embryo might benefit from the research. Bush said that he believes there are "ways to develop stem cell lines without the destruction of human life."

Story Landis, head of NIH's Stem Cell Task Force, did not say how the agency would determine what risks would be small enough to make stem cells eligible for funding or what role the Bush administration would have in the decision. Some NIH experts have said the agency likely will hold workshops and fund animal tests to study how risky various

procedures are to embryos, the Post reports (Washington Post, 7/29).