

*NRLC-Backed Fetus Farming Ban Enacted Into Law*

**Funding of Embryo-Killing Research Blocked by Bush Veto, House Vote**

WASHINGTON (August 11, 2006) - A bill to require federal funding of the type of stem cell research that requires killing human embryos died in July, when President Bush vetoed the bill and 193 members of the U.S. House of Representatives voted to sustain his veto.

The bill, H.R. 810, strongly opposed by NRLC, initially passed the House by a substantial margin in 2005, and was passed by the Senate on July 18 by a vote of 63-37. (See Senate roll call, page 23.)

President Bush vetoed the bill on July 19. At a White House event at which he was flanked by "Snowflakes" - young children who were adopted while they were still frozen embryos - and by patients who had benefitted from treatments using stem cells from sources other than human embryos, the President said that the bill "crosses a moral boundary" that he is determined to defend.

Later the same day, the House sustained the veto, 235 to 193. The roll call was nearly the same as the 2005 vote by which the House had initially approved the bill in 2005, and it was 51 votes short of the two-thirds margin necessary to override the veto. (See House roll call, pages 20-21.)

The Senate did not vote on whether to sustain the veto, since the House had already sustained it.

It was President Bush's first veto, on any subject, since he took office six years ago. The successful veto preserved the policy that the President announced on August 9, 2001, under which federal funds cannot be used for research on stem cells taken from human embryos after that date. Such research requires the killing of human embryos.

**President's Remarks**

Speaking to supporters in the East Room of the White House, President Bush said that H.R. 810 "would support the taking of innocent human life in the hope of finding medical benefits for others. It crosses a moral boundary that our decent society needs to respect, so I vetoed it."

"We must also remember that embryonic stem cells come from human embryos that are destroyed for their cells," the President said. "Each of these human embryos is a unique human life with inherent dignity and matchless value. We see that value in the children who are with us today. Each of these children began his or her life as a frozen embryo that was created for in vitro fertilization, but remained unused after the fertility treatments were complete. Each of these children was adopted while still an embryo, and has been blessed with the chance to grow up in a loving family. These boys and girls are not spare parts."

(The President's complete remarks are on page 4 of this issue. The President's veto message to Congress is on page 8.)

**Two Good Bills**

At the same time he vetoed H.R. 810, the President signed into law the Fetus Farming Prohibition Act (S. 3504), an NRLC-backed measure sponsored by Senator Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) and Congressman Dave Weldon (R-Fl.), which prohibits the use of tissues or organs from a human fetus who had been gestated for that purpose in a human or animal womb. That bill passed both houses of Congress without dissent.

NRLC Legislative Director Douglas Johnson noted that biotech researchers have already gestated cloned cows for four months and then aborted them to harvest tissues for transplantation.

"The biotech firms are not spending money on such research to find a cure for heart disease or liver disease in cows — they believe that such methods will have application in humans," Johnson said. "Senator Santorum's bill places a roadblock in the biotech industry's path to human fetus farming."

President Bush had also intended to sign a second NRLC-endorsed bill, the Alternative Pluripotent Stem Cell Therapies Enhancement Act. (S. 2754), a bill to encourage federal funding of research to try to find ways to obtain pluripotent stem cells without harming human embryos. (Pluripotent cells are those that can morph into most types of body tissue.) The bill, sponsored by Senator Santorum and Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.), passed the Senate 100-0 on July 18.

However, when the House Republican leadership sought fast-track approval of the alternatives measure, it was blocked by a minority of House members, led by Reps. Mike Castle (R-De.) and Diana DeGette (D-Co.), the chief sponsors of H.R. 810. The bill received majority support (273 to 154), but this was 12 votes short of the two-thirds margin required under the fast-track procedure. The bill was supported by 93 percent of House Republicans and by 30 percent of House Democrats.

The White House criticized those who obstructed the alternatives bill, and the President directed the National Institutes of Health to use existing legal authority to support research on "stem cell techniques that advance promising medical science in an ethical and morally responsible way."

"Researchers are now also investigating new techniques that could allow doctors and scientists to produce stem cells just as versatile as those derived from human embryos," the President explained. "One technique scientists are exploring would involve reprogramming an adult cell.

For example, a skin cell to function like an embryonic stem cell. Science offers the hope that we may one day enjoy the potential benefits of embryonic stem cells without destroying human life."

Regarding the obstruction of the ethical-alternatives bill, NRLC's Johnson commented, "It appears that most of the House members who voted against the alternatives bill are interested in funding only the type of stem cell research that kills human embryos. Any scientists who have ideas for non-embryo-killing alternatives need not apply, in their view. And to think that they call us ideologues."

Richard Doerflinger, a pro-life spokesperson for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote on National Review Online that "this frontal attack on non-embryonic-stem-cell research is very revealing. Supporters of embryonic-stem-cell research until now have said . . . that they simply support 'funding every avenue' of stem-cell research. Now some are actively attacking any way to do pluripotent-stem-cell research that does not destroy embryos, as though creating this moral problem were an end in itself."

## Senate Debate

The July 18 Senate debate on H.R. 810 was dominated by supporters of embryonic stem cell research, who insisted that research utilizing human embryos was necessary to achieve progress towards cures.

Typical of the rhetoric employed by Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY), who referred to the "group of people in America of deep faith" who oppose embryonic stem cell research.

"The trouble with this group, which I call the theocrats, is they want that faith to dictate what our Government does," Schumer said, adding, "That, in a word, is un-American."

On final passage, the bill was supported by all but one of the Senate's Democrats (Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska was the exception), and by 19 out of 55 Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (Tn.) and Senator John McCain (Az.), both often mentioned as possible contenders for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008.

In the House, the Republican leadership solidly backed the President. "No just society should condone the destruction of innocent human life, even in the name of medical research," said House Majority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio).

The veto was sustained by the votes of 179 Republicans and 14 Democrats. Fifty-one Republicans, 183 Democrats, and one independent supported the unsuccessful attempt to override the veto.

## Pro-Life Comments

"President Bush has advanced ethical research, while standing firmly against exploiting living members of the human family as sources of spare parts," said NRLC's Douglas Johnson.

"The President insisted that progress in treating devastating diseases must be pursued in ways that are both effective and morally sound," said the USCCB's Richard Doerflinger, in a statement commending the President's actions. "Illustrating his theme was the presence in the East Room of children who were adopted when they were 'spare' frozen embryos, and of patients who are grateful for the treatments they received for brain damage, leukemia and other conditions using adult and umbilical cord blood stem cells."

"President Bush has once again proved himself to be a man of his word and a champion for the preborn," said Focus on the Family Action Chairman James C. Dobson, Ph.D.

Fr. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, commented, "Science is clear about what an embryo is - a new human life. Either the Senators who voted to fund the destruction of these embryos don't acknowledge the science or they don't acknowledge that it's wrong to kill the innocent. I'd like to know which it is. I also thank God and I thank the values voters of this nation that we have a President who acknowledges both of these truths."

For more information on human embryo research, human cloning, human fetus farming, and related issues, visit the NRLC website at [ww.nrlc.org/killing\\_embryos/index.html](http://ww.nrlc.org/killing_embryos/index.html), and also the website [www.stemcellresearch.org/](http://www.stemcellresearch.org/)