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Proposal 2: Loosen restrictions on embryonic stem cells

Proposal 2 on the Nov. 4 ballot presents a tough decision for many Michigan voters.

The proposed constitutional amendment would expand use of human embryos for any research permitted under federal law. The proposal only applies to embryos created for fertility treatment purposes which were either not suitable for implantation or were in excess of what was needed. They could only be donated for research by the person who was seeking fertility treatment.

Michigan's laws regarding embryonic stem cell research are among the most restrictive in the nation - to the point that scientists are leaving places like the University of Michigan to pursue their research elsewhere.

Opponents of Proposal 2 say researchers should pursue adult stem cells and umbilical cord blood research. But embryonic stem cells are more versatile and hold greater promise in treating spinal cord injuries and diseases such as Type I diabetes, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

We understand the convictions of those whose religious beliefs prevent them from supporting use of embryos for research. And we have concerns about constitutionally restricting state regulation of research, as Proposal 2 would do. But those concerns are eased by federal and institutional safeguards already in place.

The bottom line: Embryos which could be used for valuable research currently are being discarded as medical waste. Proposal 2 would change Michigan law to allow use of those embryos to help cure diseases and treat debilitating injuries. Michigan voters should support it.