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## Governor allows stem-cell funding

*New law aims to spur medical research*

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In an effort to woo researchers and investors to Illinois, Gov. Rod Blagojevich Tuesday signed a bill that allows public funding of research on all types of stem cells, including controversial embryonic stem cells.

Supporters hope the legislation, sponsored by state Sen. Jeff Schoenberg (D-Evanston) and state Rep. Tom Cross (R-Oswego), will pave the way for groundbreaking research that has been caught in the middle of a national political debate.

"Stem-cell research has limitless potential to help cure devastating diseases -- from Parkinson's to diabetes and even many forms of cancer," Blagojevich said in a written statement. "Since the federal government continues to stall the medical advancements that will come with stem-cell research, it is up to Illinois to take action."

In June, President Bush vetoed legislation for the second consecutive year that would have eased restrictions on federal funding for embryonic stem-cell research.

Although no money is directly tied to the Illinois law, the bill's sponsors said they would seek to secure millions in funding over the next few months.

The measure, which bans human cloning, ensures researchers could work with embryonic stem cells in Illinois, which typically come from early-stage human embryos left over from in-vitro fertilization. Groups opposed to abortion argue the research requires the destruction of human embryos and is immoral. Proponents say embryonic stem cells offer the best chance of treating or curing many debilitating diseases.

The law also establishes procedures for couples to donate their unused in-vitro fertilization treatments for research and authorizes the Illinois Department of Public Health to administer the Illinois Regenerative Medicine Institute to give grants for research.

Blagojevich created the institute two years ago with an executive order, allocating \$15 million for stem-cell research.

One institution to receive funding is the Children's Memorial Research Center, which is using stem cells to try to reverse the progression of diseases such as epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Also on Tuesday, Blagojevich vetoed a bill requiring teachers to observe a moment of silence at the start of each school day.

"I believe this is the right balance between the principles echoed in our constitution, and our deeply held desire to practice our faith," he said.