

# The Detroit News

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## Update Michigan's embryonic research laws

*Restrictive rules stymie hopes to make state biomedical center*

*THE DETROIT NEWS*

Michigan is one of five states that most severely curtail scientific research using embryonic stem cells.

The use of embryonic stem cells might be useful in finding cures for everything from breast cancer to Parkinson's disease. And the restrictions are impeding the state's bid to make use of its major universities to become a center for biomedical research.

Michigan has the chance to progress in this area under new legislation introduced by state Reps. Andy Meisner and Mark Meadows, Democrats from Ferndale and East Lansing, respectively. Their three-bill package would update state laws to be in sync with federal law.

Losses of potential jobs and cures are painfully clear. Already the University of Michigan has lost one of its most important researchers to California because of state limits on research. Michael Clarke oversaw laboratory studies that were the first to isolate stem cells from breast tumors.

U-M's Center for Stem Cell Biology -- one of only three embryonic stem cell research centers funded by the National Institutes of Health -- continues to risk losing more talent, and its growth is hindered.

The state has pinned some of its hopes for economic recovery on creating a biomedical medical research corridor by developing synergy among the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Wayne State University and medical research institutes in Grand Rapids.

Michigan's laws are a reflection of right-to-life advocates who argue any embryonic research is an affront to life and prefer adult stem cell research.

But the reality is that tens of thousands of embryos already are discarded or await that fate.

Advocates of reform are exploring a ballot initiative for 2008. It shouldn't come to that.

The state Legislature should act to bring Michigan's stem cell research laws in line with federal regulations.