

# The Detroit News

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## Vote yes on Prop 2 to overturn research ban

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Michigan has one of the most backward laws on embryonic stem cell research in the nation. Prop 2 on the November ballot would change that. Residents should vote yes on Prop 2.

Currently, it is against the law to destroy a human embryo in Michigan. In effect, this also bans embryonic stem cell research, since the research process entails embryo destruction. Prop 2 is a constitutional amendment that allows embryonic stem cell research under certain conditions.

These conditions include that the embryos subject to research were created for the purpose of fertility treatment, the person seeking the treatment voluntarily opted to donate the embryos for research and that they would be discarded anyway if they were not going to be used for research.

The amendment forbids the sale of embryos for stem cell research and keeps in place Michigan's ban on human cloning.

Michigan has one of the leading stem cell research centers at the University of Michigan, but scientists there worry that the embryonic stem cell research ban will damage its ability to continue to recruit top researchers. Doug Engel, a professor of cell and developmental biology at the university and head of the department, notes that one of his colleagues, a top stem cell biologist, has already left the university for California because of Michigan's current laws.

While the center can use some embryonic stem cells that have been developed out of state, Engel notes, one of his colleagues has been waiting seven months for stem cell lines, a situation that "is not conducive to cutting-edge research." While adult stem cells have produced useful research and treatments of blood disease, embryonic stem cells remain "the gold standard" for research for all kinds of diseases, including cancer, he notes. But, he adds, under current law, if the university's researchers try to develop their own stem cell lines from embryos, they could face criminal prosecution.

Opponents warn that other language in this amendment, which prohibits future regulations on this research, could be problematic, and they have a point. In a new area of research, regulation may be necessary. But if that necessity arises, a process is in place to revise the state Constitution.

It should also be noted that no language in the proposal compels the expenditure of any funds, contrary to the impression some opponents' advertising attempts to create.

Sean Morrison, who is head of the university's Center for Stem Cell Biology, has often noted that under current law, it is legal in Michigan for fertility clinics to discard human embryos, but not to use them for medical research to try and help patients. That makes no sense.

Vote yes on Prop 2.