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## State should open door to research

By: JACKSON CITIZEN PATRIOT

*The following is a Jackson Citizen Patriot editorial for October 19:*

The public debate over Proposal 2, to promote research on embryonic stem cells in Michigan, has been filled with more heat than light. That is unfortunate. While this research may not be everything that is promised, it is not remotely the bogeyman that opponents say it is. Voters should say yes to this proposal.

Proposal 2 aims to overturn Michigan's ban on destroying embryos for scientific research. This restriction, one of a handful in the country, is significant because many scientists say it slows research into medical treatments from embryonic stem cells.

What are stem cells? They are the basic material that grow into tissue, muscle, bone —everything in the human body. Adult stem cells already are the source of many medical therapies, but the fight here is over embryonic stem cells.

Embryonic cells have the potential to be turned into any types of cells — they could be programmed to do anything — and help an array of therapies. Advocates say their possibilities are limitless. That is not the case with adult stem cells, even though opponents would have you believe that. There is a difference between the two.

There really is no scientific reason for Michigan to outlaw the destruction of embryos for stem-cell research. Proposal 2 would allow only the use of embryos from fertility clinics here that otherwise would be destroyed. Many voters have ethical concerns with the use of embryos, but it cannot be denied that many embryos are destroyed already. Why not put them to use to save lives?

The campaign against Proposal 2 raises many misleading red flags. Opponents say it will cost tax dollars. There is nothing in the proposal that costs any money. They say it will open the door to human cloning. Yet the proposal actually reaffirms Michigan's cloning ban.

Critics also note that embryonic stem-cell research has produced no cures for disease. That is correct. But that is largely because embryonic stem cells have been used in research for only a decade, while adult stem cells have been available much, much longer. Researchers believe that embryonic stem cells have the potential to produce cures for diseases such as juvenile diabetes and Alzheimer's.

We do not believe that this state, with two major research universities, should close the door on legitimate medical research.

Voters have an opportunity to promote valuable scientific work in this state. We encourage the public to approve Proposal 2.

— Jackson Citizen Patriot