
Let stem cell vote move cures closer

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Nancy Reagan is nudging the issue along. And polls show increasing support for lifting the limits on federally funded embryonic stem cell research. It's time for the U.S. Senate to put this to a vote.

Reagan recently urged Senate action in a memo to Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, a sponsor of the bill that President George W. Bush has threatened to use his first veto against. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, the Tennessee surgeon who has hopes of being the Republican nominee for president in 2008, has been promising a vote since shortly after the measure passed the House.

But 10 months have gone by. That's 10 months of scientists begging for money instead of having it at the ready. Ten months of scientists experimenting on cell lines contaminated with mouse cells instead of seeing where new, pure lines could take them. Ten months of people suffering and dying -- with loved ones bearing heartbreaking witness -- instead of getting closer to a cure.

The religious right says the research results in "killing an embryo." Except most of the cells scientists want to explore are discarded by fertilization labs because they are too deformed to be implanted. The rest potential parents have decided not to use nor donate for rare adoptions.

So possible cures for some of the worst diseases get thrown out with the trash. This in the name of humanity?

Some senators say there's no point in voting because of Bush's veto threat. Well, Bush has not said "no" to a single piece of legislation that has crossed his desk. If this is where he wants to make his stand, let him. In fact, make him. Then make him explain his compassion to the families whose loved ones hold out hope for a lifesaving research breakthrough.

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