




MIRS Capitol Capsule

No Stem Cell Reports In House's Higher Ed Budget

June 8, 2010

Today, with the minimum 55 yes votes needed, the House passed  [SB 1157](#), a higher education budget that would spend about \$40 million more than what the Senate version would. But the bigger obstacle on the floor was a side issue.

To get the bill passed, House Speaker Andy [DILLON](#) (D-Redford Twp.) had to personally vote against a Right to Life-backed amendment and then use some procedural slight of hand.

The dilemma Dillon faced with the budget was that the Senate-passed version included a requirement that universities report on their embryonic stem cell research activities (See "[Senate Passes First 4 Budgets](#)," 3/23/10).

That language was stripped from the budget in the House Appropriations Subcommittee. But then Reps. Dave [HILDENBRAND](#) (R-Lowell) and Robert [DEAN](#) (D-Grand Rapids), who are running against each other in the 29th Senate District, came up with an amendment that would basically put the Senate language back in.

This meant that Dillon had a Catch-22. The House is a pro-life chamber, which meant the amendment would pass. However, once the stem cell wording was back in the bill, the pro-choice Democrats would oppose it, while the Republicans would also vote no on it for other (spending) reasons.

Today, Dillon allowed the vote on the amendment. It passed on a 58-48 vote, with Dillon voting "no." Shortly after that passed, another amendment was gavelled through that eliminated the wording of the amendment.

A while later, the full bill passed on a 55-51 vote. The key votes came from those who supported the Hildenbrand-Dean amendment but were still willing to support the bill even after the amendment was eliminated. They were Reps. Bob [CONSTAN](#) (D-Dearborn Heights), Kate [EBLI](#) (D-Monroe), John [ESPINOZA](#) (D-Croswell), Mike [HUCKLEBERRY](#) (D-Greenville) and Joel [SHELTROWN](#) (D-West Branch).

"I think it would have been better if we'd debated higher education instead of the vote being about this," Rep. Joan [BAUER](#) (D-Lansing) told *MIRS*, regarding the higher ed budget battle being over stem cells instead of education spending.

The Senate version of the budget put tuition grants in, but cut the university budget by 3.5 percent. The Governor's recommendation had cut the tuition grants and left the funding flat.

The House version funded both. It added the tuition grants and restored the 3.5 percent funding the Senate had cut. In addition, the House added \$8 million in Michigan competitive scholarships.

The bill will now go back to the Senate, where it will likely be rejected and sent into a conference committee. It seems likely the stem cell issue will pop up again in the conference hearings.