



Everything Michigan

— THE —
ANN ARBOR NEWS

Stem cell research bill a top legislative priority State can't afford to fall behind in research

Monday, December 11, 2006

Advocates for expanded stem cell research see promising signs on both the state and federal levels - we hope they're right.

Earlier this year, President Bush vetoed legislation to increase federal funding of research that uses embryonic stem cells. And in the Michigan Legislature, a bill that would have lifted state restrictions on this kind of research never made it out of committee.

Research involving embryonic stem cells is controversial, with opponents arguing that embryos should be treated with the same sanctity as all human life. Yet when fertility clinics regularly dispose of embryos that could be used for life-saving research, this argument is hard to accept.

It's especially hard to accept when researchers see such promise in embryonic stem cell research for tackling cancer, Parkinson's, Lou Gehrig's and numerous other diseases.

To combat a lack of federal funding, scientists at the University of Michigan have sought private dollars to pursue their research. Even so, they say state laws restrict what they can do.

"The federal restrictions slow us down a little bit, the state (laws) slow us down a lot," Sean Morrison, director of the U-M Center for Stem Cell Biology, recently told The News.

That needs to change.

Several states - notably California, Massachusetts and Wisconsin, but others as well - have pushed ahead with aggressive funding and laws that allow researchers greater freedom to use embryonic stem cells in their work.

Michigan needs to do the same, and we urge state legislators to make this a top priority in the new year.