



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

NEWSBRIEFS

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November, 2008

We Will Have Our Say on Stem Cell Research

Ballot Proposal #2 Deserves Our Support

By Adrienne Aluzzo, Librarian

On November 4th voters will have the opportunity to make stem cell research legal and effective in Michigan. A vote in favor of the proposal on this year's ballot will end one of the most restrictive stem cell policies in the country, even more restrictive than current federal rules.

What is a Stem Cell?

A stem cell is a generic cell that can make exact copies of itself indefinitely. It also has the ability to produce specialized cells for various tissues in the body, such as heart muscle, brain tissue and liver tissue. Scientists can maintain these stem cells forever, developing them into specialized cells as needed.

There are a variety of diseases and injuries in which a patient's cells or tissues are destroyed and must be replaced by tissue or organ transplants. Stem cells may be able to generate brand new tissue in these cases and even cure diseases for which currently there is no adequate therapy, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, diabetes, spinal cord injury, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, cancer and burns.

Stem cells could also be used to gain a better understanding of how genetics work in the early stages of cell development, helping scientists understand why some cells don't develop normally and lead to birth defects and cancer. Because they can create unlimited amounts of specialized tissue, it

may be possible to test how drugs react on these specialized tissues before trying them on animals and human subjects.

The Debate

Michigan law currently makes it a felony to use new embryonic stems cells (those leftover from fertility treatment) for research into cures for serious diseases. Michigan is only one of five states in the country with such severe restrictions. The penalties for scientists who use stem cells in their research can range up to \$10 million dollars in fines and 10 years in prison.

Supporters of this ban believe that a fertilized egg is fundamentally a human being with rights and interests that need to be protected. Whatever other objections the opponents of Proposal 2

raise (see below), their opposition is based on this matter of faith.

Supporters point out that the ballot proposal would allow scientists to conduct embryonic stem cell research using only leftover embryos from fertility clinics that would otherwise be discarded as medical waste. The written consent of the donors would be required before these fertilized eggs could be used for research purposes.

All stem cell research and stem cell therapies and cures would be strictly regulated to ensure that state and local laws are obeyed. **con't on page 2**

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The sale of embryos would be strictly prohibited and nothing in the proposal would affect the current Michigan ban on human cloning.

The passage of this proposal in Michigan would attract and create new jobs in the life sciences. The federal government projects that biotech and pharmaceutical companies will hire 12.5 percent more people by 2012. Estimates show that new investments in life sciences within a single state could result in 7,000 new jobs directly related to the biotech industry and 15,000 total new jobs. This would produce an estimated \$307 million more in state revenue.

The Big Lie

In opposition to Proposal 2 a group called "Michigan Citizens Against Unrestricted Science and Experimentation" (MiCAUSE) has launched an ad campaign saying that approval of the ballot proposal will cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Rather than honestly state their religious grounds for opposing Proposal 2, the supporters of this negative campaign (including the Michigan Catholic Conference and Right to Life of Michigan), would rather appeal to fears about higher taxes and the threat that stem cell research will lead to human cloning.

Both are lies. The language of the proposal expressly forbids human cloning and there is no provision for tax-supported funding. Indeed, journalist Dawson Bell reported in the September 26 edition of the *Detroit Free Press* that MiCAUSE "acknowledge[d] the constitutional amendment does not include any provisions for taxpayer funding of research." Opponents of Proposition 2 apparently chose to promote this lie in an attempt to scare Michigan voters already financially strapped and fearful of future expenses.

For a recent in-depth report on the blatant disregard for the truth in the anti-Prop 2 campaign, go to <http://www.wxyz.com/news/story> and watch or read the story by reporter Steve Wilson of WXYZ TV, Channel 7, "The Battle Over Stem Cell Research."

Don't fall for the hype, read the ballot for yourself and decide!

Proposal 2

A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ADDRESS HUMAN EMBRYO AND HUMAN EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH IN MICHIGAN

The proposed constitutional amendment would:

- Expand use of human embryos for any research permitted under federal law subject to the following limits: the embryos —
 - are created for fertility treatment purposes;
 - are not suitable for implantation or are in excess of clinical needs;
 - would be discarded unless used for research;
 - were donated by the person seeking fertility treatment.

- Provide that stem cells cannot be taken from human embryos more than 14 days after cell division begins.
- Prohibit any person from selling or purchasing human embryos for stem cell research.
- Prohibit state and local laws that prevent, restrict or discourage stem cell research, future therapies and cures.

Should this proposal be adopted? — Yes — No

For more information on the ballot proposal please go to: Michigan Citizens for Stem Cell Research & Cures: <http://www.stemcellresearchformichigan.com/index>, or Cure Michigan: <http://www.curemichigan.com/> and for opposing viewpoints see: Michigan Citizens Against Unrestricted Science and Experimentation: <http://www.micause.com>.

Barack Obama and John McCain both support embryonic stem cell research, as does Joe Biden. Sarah Palin, however, opposes the use of embryonic stem cells for research purposes. A follower of the Pentecostal faith, Palin is also in favor of teaching both Creationism and Evolution in the public schools, and is opposed to abortion even in cases of rape or incest.



American Federation of Teachers

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U.S. Senate: Carl Levin (D)

U.S. House, District:

1 Bart Stupak (D)

5 Dale Kildee (D)

7 Mark Schauer (D)

9 Gary Peters (D)

12 Sander Levin (D)

13 Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick(D)

14 John Conyers, Jr. (D)

15 John Dingell (D)

Michigan Supreme Court:

Judge Diane Hathaway

Wayne State Governors:

Paul Massaron (D)

Gary Pollard (D)

Michigan State Trustees:

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Dianne Byrum (D)

Univ. of Michigan Regents:

Larry Deitch (D)

Denise Ilitch (D)

State Board of Education:

Kathleen Straus (D)

John Austin (D)

Michigan House of Representatives:

Tim Bledsoe (D)* (District 1)

*Member of WSU Faculty

Is This What A Maverick Looks Like?



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