

News Release

For immediate release

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American Diabetes Association Urges U.S. Senate To Finally Pass Stem Cell Research Legislation

*H.R. 810/S. 471 will expand embryonic stem cell research; help advance search
for better treatment and a cure for diabetes*

Alexandria, VA (May 16, 2006) – The American Diabetes Association today urged the U.S. Senate to take up and pass the “Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005” (H.R. 810/S.471), legislation that would accelerate stem cell research by easing existing restrictions and supporting research that uses embryonic stem cells. It has almost been a year since the U.S. House of Representatives passed the stem cell legislation with clear, bipartisan support, but it has languished in the Senate since, despite the support of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. Public opinion polls show a strong majority of Americans support stem cell research. The Association has been a strong supporter of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act because it would advance the search for better treatment and a cure for diabetes, one of the nation’s most prevalent, debilitating and deadly diseases.

The Association applauds the bill’s Senate sponsors – Arlen Specter (R-PA), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Diane Feinstein (D-CA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Ted Kennedy (D-MA), and Gordon Smith (R-OR) – for their continued leadership on the issue.

“Almost a year has passed since the U.S. House of Representatives took the bipartisan initiative to pass legislation to expand the number of stem cell lines that are eligible for federally funded research,” said Lawrence T. Smith, Chair of the Board of the American Diabetes Association, and the father of a daughter who has type 1 diabetes. “Americans with diabetes, and millions of Americans with other chronic and debilitating illnesses, shouldn’t have to wait another year - much less another month or another day - for the Senate to finally pass this important legislation. We know the potential embryonic stem cell research has in the search for a cure, now we must ensure that researchers have the opportunity to take advantage of this.

Although the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the country’s leading research institution, the work it can carry out in the area of stem cell research has been severely limited due to current federal policy.

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National Office

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Diabetes Information

call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
online www.diabetes.org
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The Mission of the American

Diabetes Association is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes.

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Federal regulations that President Bush announced in 2001 have restricted the number of human embryonic stem cell lines available for federally-funded research, and attempted usage of those lines has demonstrated that the number of adequate lines is even smaller due to contamination. Since 2001, scientists have discovered much better methods of deriving stem cell lines so that they do not face the same contamination issues. A significant expansion in the number of available lines is necessary in order to fully reap the medical rewards of stem cell research.

Stem cell research allows scientists to better explore how to control and direct stem cells so they can grow into other cells, such as insulin-producing beta cells found in the pancreas. Creating new beta cells could mean a cure for type 1 diabetes as they would serve as a replenishable source of cells for islet cell transplantation. They could also provide a powerful tool for controlling type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes is one of the nation's most prevalent, debilitating and costly diseases. Nearly 21 million American children and adults have diabetes, up from 18 million when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last measured diabetes incidence in 2003. If present trends continue, one in three Americans, and one in two minorities, born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime. The cost of diabetes in the U.S. in 2002 was at least \$132 billion; one in ten healthcare dollars is spent on diabetes and its complications.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. The Association's advocacy efforts include helping to combat discrimination against people with diabetes; advocating for the increase of federal diabetes research and programs; and improved access to, and quality of, healthcare for people with diabetes. The Association's mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. Founded in 1940, the Association provides service to hundreds of communities across the country. For more information please call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or visit www.diabetes.org. Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

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