

News Release

For immediate release

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American Diabetes Association: Embryonic Stem Cell Research Offers Most Promise for Americans with Diabetes

H.R. 810 alone – more than any other legislation – would advance the search for a cure and better treatments for diabetes

Alexandria, VA (July 17, 2006) – On the eve of the Senate’s vote on stem cell research, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) – the nation’s leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy – today urged Senators that there is no acceptable alternative to the passage of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (H.R. 810). The ADA has been a strong supporter of the bill, which would accelerate stem cell research by easing existing restrictions and supporting research that uses embryonic stem cells, while maintaining strict ethical guidelines. The fact is, many embryos that currently exist as part of infertility treatments are slated to be discarded. Rather than disposing of these embryos, they could be used to save millions of lives. The Senate will consider two other bills this week as part of the stem cell debate, Senate Bill 2754 and Senate Bill 3504. According to ADA, S.2754 would accomplish nothing that cannot already be done without this legislation, while S.3504, a bill to ban “fetal farming,” would ban an activity that is already unacceptable in the field of science.

“H.R. 810 is the one bill in the package of bills being debated that truly offers promise to the 20.8 million American children and adults with diabetes,” said Lawrence T. Smith, Chair of the American Diabetes Association, who has a daughter with type 1 diabetes. “The American Diabetes Association is committed to finding a cure for this disease, and we support the exploration of every ethical avenue of research. The most respected scientists in our field view human embryonic stem cells as an area of research that must be explored. Under the current restrictions, this is not happening on the scale necessary to pursue lifesaving cures.”

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

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Diabetes Information

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

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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.

The American Diabetes Association also expressed serious concerns about a possible impending Presidential veto.

“We understand that the President has said he plans to veto H.R. 810,” Smith said. “This would be a devastating setback for Americans who are affected by diabetes, and we sincerely hope he rethinks this position. The President has a responsibility to the 70 percent of Americans who support the use of embryonic stem cell research in order to pursue cures for diabetes and dozens of other debilitating and deadly diseases. This is an historic opportunity to advance scientific research, and it should not be squandered.”

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 prevalence 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.

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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