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Washington, DC – Speaking on the House floor, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) passionately urged support for H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, a bipartisan bill to expand stem cell research. The bill lifts the restriction on the number of stem cell lines that are eligible for federally funded research, thereby accelerating scientific progress toward cures and treatments for a wide range of diseases and debilitating conditions.

“I am pleased that my colleagues and I were able to debate stem cell research on the floor today. It is an issue which is of much interest to my hometown of Sacramento, the entire state of California as well as an issue of great interest to me,” stated Matsui. “However, I am saddened that the passage of this bi-partisan stem cell research bill is the occasion the president has chosen to threaten to use his first veto.”

Enactment of this bill will lift the current restrictions on embryonic stem cell research allowing research on stem cell lines regardless of the date on which they were derived. Additionally, the bill institutes stronger ethical requirements on stem cell lines that are eligible for federally funded research. Further the bill calls on the Secretary of Health and Human Services to issue guidelines on using stem cells derived from embryos originally created for fertility treatment and which would otherwise be thrown away.

“I rise today in support of H.R. 2520 as well as the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act as both bills are part of today’s larger debate on stem cell research and the hope being offered with them.

“As Samuel Smiles said, “Hope” is the companion of power, and the mother of success; for who so hopes has within him the gift of miracles.”

“That is what today’s debate is about, because at its core stem cell research is about the idea of hope and miracles. A hope which has become quite personal for me. As you know, my husband, Bob, who worked with all of you for many years, suffered from a rare bone marrow disease, MDS. I saw what this disease did to him. I saw his life cut short. And it is my hope that by expanding stem cell research other families will have more than just a hope for a cure for this disease, as well as many others.

“But to be effective, hope and optimism need to be based on a possibility. This is what we are talking about here today – whether or not this country will close the door on hope, on the unexplainable, on what is truly a miracle. It is clear that by passing this bill and the stem cell research enhancement act we will not be reading articles in next week’s paper that we found the cure for cancer.

“But, I feel strongly that the effects of federal dollars and involvement in stem cell research will make an unquestionable difference. Our country has been a leader in so many areas of medicine – now is not the time to cede our role to countries like South Korea, England and France. By doing so we would not only diminish the contributions of Americans, but also our ability to impact the ethical debate.

“Both bills are an important step in harnessing the power of optimism. I hope we will not ignore this opportunity.”

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