

Matsui Votes to Expand Federal Stem Cell Research Overwhelming bipartisan vote sends bill directly

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Overwhelming bipartisan vote sends bill directly to President's desk

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) joined today with a bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives to pass legislation expanding stem cell research in the United States. The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007 (S. 5), which was approved by the bipartisan majority of 247 to 176, lifts the President's ban on federal support for some of the most promising research techniques in all of medicine. "Research and medical ingenuity are our society's tools to fight disease," said Matsui. "The hope that stem cell research brings is one reason it enjoys such bipartisan support." Over 100 million Americans affected by debilitating or life-threatening diseases would benefit from increased scientific access to embryonic stem cell lines. Freeing these stem cells for federally-funded research is supported by over 70 percent of the American public, in addition to bipartisan majorities in both chambers of Congress.

Below is the text of Congresswoman Matsui's remarks that she delivered while managing the rule for general debate on S. 5, as prepared for delivery:

Madam Speaker, today's debate on stem cell research should be about the hope of science. It should be about how our society has always valued ethical medical research. Many Americans awoke this morning to a news story about a potential new stem cell research technique using skin cells from mice. It was on the front page of many newspapers precisely because our society values hope and scientific advancement when done in an ethical manner. The bill made in order under this rule maintains that tradition. With the House's approval, expanded federal embryonic stem cell research will again be one signature away from becoming law. Madam Speaker, we already know that embryonic stem cell research has the potential to cure many debilitating conditions like diabetes, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, spinal cord damage, and maybe even bone marrow failure. These ailments affect the old and the young, the rich and the poor. Families from all walks of life have first-hand experience with these tragedies. Sad but true, disease is one of life's great equalizers. Research and medical ingenuity are our society's tools to fight these diseases. This shared experience—the hope that stem cell research brings—may be one reason why it enjoys such bipartisan support. Polls indicate that three out of every five Americans support stem cell research, including 54 percent of Republicans. But there are many other reasons to endorse expanded federal stem cell research. Earlier this year, Congress and the world heard support from an unexpected source. In testimony before Congress on March 19th, the Director of the NIH made a high-profile break with the Administration on its short-sighted stem cell policy. He said, "it is clear today that American science will be better served—and the nation will be better served—if we let our scientists have access to more cell lines that they can study."

The United States has always led the effort to push the frontiers of medical research. But as the NIH Director's testimony indicates, Madam Speaker, on this issue the U.S. is falling behind for no good scientific or moral reason.

His testimony is in line with the consensus within the wider scientific community as well. The American Association for

the Advancement of Science, the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation, the UC Davis Medical Center in my hometown of Sacramento, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas in my colleague's district, the Lance Armstrong Foundation, all these and hundreds of others support ethical embryonic stem cell research.

Madam Speaker, it is abundantly clear that we must update our national stem cell research policy. A bipartisan majority in Congress has tried several times.

Last year, both chambers voted—by wide bipartisan margins—to expand ethical, federal stem cell research. Unfortunately, the President blocked that progress, that hope, that good science.

But his veto only delays the issue temporarily, because support for this responsible research continues to grow.

Earlier this year, the new Democratic Majority acted swiftly to reconsider the issue. The bill before us is the result of that bipartisan, bicameral leadership. And it passed by a greater margin than in the last Congress.

We should act now to forward that proposal onto the president. We should give him another chance to do what's right by signing this bill into law.

Madam Speaker, there is little disagreement about the science of stem cell research or what ethical rules should govern it. So let's stop delaying a common-sense proposal.

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