

## **SURVEY: MORE AMERICANS SUPPORT STEM CELL RESEARCH, WITH EVEN WIDER BACKING SEEN FOR BIPARTISAN FEDERAL BILL, STATE PUSHES**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.//February 15, 2005**//More than three out of five Americans (63 percent) now back embryonic stem cell research, and even higher levels of support exist for bipartisan federal legislation to promote more such research (70 percent) and the growing number of state-level initiatives to encourage stem cell work (76 percent do or might support such measures), according to a new survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) on behalf of the Results for America (RFA) project of the nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute.

On the eve of the introduction of a bill in Congress by Rep. Michael Castle, R-DE., and Rep. Diana DeGette, D-CO., to expand federal stem cell research, the RFA survey shows that a growing number of Americans favor going beyond President Bush's strict limits on stem cell research for medical research purposes. The level of public support for wider federal stem cell research now is slightly higher than it was after the death last spring of former President Ronald Reagan, whose widow, Nancy Reagan, called for the elimination of barriers to the exploration of stem cells for possible medical treatments.

Another factor identified by the survey as driving the public's support for stem cell research: The recent announcement that most or all of the stem cell lines approved for federal research purposes have been compromised, and thereby rendered useless for the pursuit of possible medical cures.

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: **“These findings clearly show that stem cell research is not an issue that is going to go away. If anything, the level of public backing is rising, edging up from the high-water mark of support brought about by the extensive public discussion about stem cell research in the wake of the passing of former President Ronald Reagan. The growing number of state-level ballot initiatives and legislative pushes means that federal lawmakers have two choices: either get out front and lead on this issue or be overtaken by all of the clamoring for stem cell research that is bubbling up from the grassroots level.”**

ORC Senior Project Manager Graham Hueber said: **“The very high level of support for the proposed bipartisan federal legislation on stem cell research is quite striking in these findings. Respondents in higher income households (77 percent) and those with a college degree (76 percent) are significantly more likely to support the bill than those with lower levels of education or income. And while liberals are very much in support of the legislation (86 percent), so, too, are most moderates (80 percent) and more than half of conservatives. What we see in these numbers is that the bipartisan approach to addressing the stem cell issue takes what is already a strong overall level of support and makes it even stronger.”**

In August 2001, the Bush administration imposed a major new restriction on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. The restriction meant that research on stem cell lines created before August 2001 could receive funding, but prohibited support for research on stem cell lines developed after that date.

## **KEY SURVEY FINDINGS**

- Support for embryonic stem cell research continues to grow, with 63 percent of American adults now supporting it and 28 percent in opposition -- and only 17 percent terming themselves “strongly opposed.” These unaided findings compare favorably with the June 2004 RFA survey in the wake of the death of President Ronald Reagan, when stem cell research support climbed to 60 percent-26 percent. The same question posed in 2001 found support at 48 percent-43 percent. When an explanation is provided of embryonic stem cell research, the support level rises to 72 percent-25 percent, including 55 percent of conservatives. This was roughly unchanged from the June 2004 survey, when the margin was 72 percent-23 percent.
- Amidst reports that the stem cells lines approved by President Bush for research purposes have been contaminated and rendered unusable, 69 percent support "expanding President Bush’s policy in this area to allow federal funding for research on stem cells developed from excess embryos frozen in fertility clinics and donated by the parents." This level of support includes 56 percent of conservatives, with 80 percent of moderates and 84 percent of liberals.
- Support for the bipartisan stem cell research expected to be introduced by Rep. Castle, R-DE., and Rep. Diana DeGette, D-CO., is strong at 70 percent-26 percent, including 53 percent of conservatives, 80 percent of moderates and 86 percent of liberals. The bill would expand federal funding for research on stem cells that are developed from embryos frozen in fertility clinics and which otherwise would be discarded.
- More than three out of four (76 percent) do or might support state-level stem cell initiatives, with 21 percent in opposition. Of the first number, 58 percent said "yes" and 18 percent indicated they might support such state-level pushes.
- In general, 72 percent support expanded federal government support for medical research, including stem cell research.
- Over half (54 percent) are or might be concerned about a stem cell "brain drain" with U.S. researchers going overseas, with 42 percent not being concerned. Of the first number, 38 percent indicated they are concerned and 16 percent indicated they might be concerned.

Full survey findings are available online at <http://www.ResultsForAmerica.org>.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Results For America commissioned this ORC Caravan survey to gain a current understanding of the views of Americans on stem cell research. Results are based on telephone interviews conducted among a sample of 1,022 adults (510 men and 512 women) aged 18 and over living in private households in the continental United States. Interviewing was completed during the period of February 3-6, 2005. The margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level is plus or minus three percentage points for the sample of 1,022 adults. Smaller sub-groups will have larger error margins. Some questions were repeated from an earlier survey. Those questions were asked in a

RFA survey of 1,017 adults (509 men and 508 women) during the period of June 10-13, 2004. That survey was conducted after the death of former President Ronald Reagan.

### **ABOUT RESULTS FOR AMERICA**

Results for America (<http://www.ResultsforAmerica.org>) is a project of the Civil Society Institute, which is based in Newton, Massachusetts. The mission of CSI is to serve as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business, that can help to improve society. You may visit Civil Society Institute on the Web at <http://www.CivilSocietyInstitute.org>. RFA seeks to shape and tap the tremendous amount of community-level knowledge, experience and innovative action that could solve America's problems in four key areas, including: "Healthy Families, Healthy Economy, Healthy America." It also supports a commitment to biomedical technologies and breakthrough treatments and cures for life-threatening illnesses that affect millions of us.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A streaming audio replay of a related news event will be available as of 6 p.m. EST on January 15, 2005 at <http://www.ResultsForAmerica.org>. The same Web site will contain an overview of the survey findings, topline survey questions and data, and a news release.