

SURVEY: 3 OUT OF 4 AMERICANS SUPPORT NANCY REAGAN'S CALL FOR MORE STEM CELL RESEARCH

*First Survey Since Death of President Reagan Gauges Impact of Event on Public Views;
Strong Support for Research Seen Among Conservatives, Independents and Fundamentalists.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.//June 16, 2004//By a decisive margin of 74-21 percent, Americans support former First Lady Nancy Reagan's call for the Bush White House to lift restrictions on stem cell research in order to look for possible treatments for the Alzheimer's disease that afflicted former President Ronald Reagan prior to his recent death, as well as the other grave illnesses – including diabetes, Parkinson's, heart disease and multiple sclerosis – that are suffered by millions of other Americans, 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.

The first opinion survey of public attitudes about stem cell research to be conducted since the death of President Reagan also found that 72 percent of Americans say they are more likely in the wake of Reagan's passing to support stem cell research, including 76 percent of moderates, 64 percent of conservatives and 62 percent of fundamentalist or evangelical Christians. Also, Nancy Reagan's clout in the national stem cell debate appears to have risen sharply, with 80 percent of Americans viewing her as credible on the issue, up from 65 percent in a separate survey conducted during March 2004 in 18 key states.

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: **“We now can say with certainty that the death of Ronald Reagan is altering the course of the national dialogue about stem cell research. When almost three out of four Americans say that they are more likely to support stem cell research after the death of President Reagan, what you are witnessing is a fundamental shift in the way that average Americans think about this issue.”**

ORC Senior Research Manager Wayne Russum said: **“What you see here is really about as close to bipartisan and pan-religious agreement as you can get in American today on any topic. Three in four Americans (74 percent) support Nancy Reagan's call for the White House to lift restrictions on stem cell research to search for a possible cure for Alzheimer's disease and other grave illnesses. That high level of support for the former First Lady's view on this issue translates into a solid majority of conservatives (62 percent), fundamentalists/ evangelicals (62 percent) and moderates (79 percent).”**

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 FINDINGS

- ***A strong majority of Americans support Nancy Reagan's call for the Bush White House to lift restrictions on stem cell research that might help to find cures for such ailments as the Alzheimer's disease that afflicted the recently deceased President Ronald Reagan, as well as other illnesses such as diabetes, Parkinson's, heart disease and multiple sclerosis.*** By a margin of 74 percent to 21 percent, Americans (including 79 percent of moderates and 62 percent of conservatives) say that they back the former First Lady's call for more stem cell research flexibility.
- ***The death of Ronald Reagan is boosting support for stem cell research.*** When asked "would you be more or less likely to support stem cell research if you knew that experts think it may hold the key to curing the Alzheimer's disease that afflicted President Reagan," 72 percent of Americans said they would be more likely to support stem cell research, including 76 percent of moderates, 64 percent of conservatives and 62 percent of fundamentalist or evangelical Christians.
- ***Nancy Reagan's clout on stem cell research issues appears to be much greater since the death of her husband.*** The former first lady is seen as very or somewhat credible on stem cell research issues by 80 percent of Americans, including 77 percent of conservatives, 81 percent of moderates and 74 percent of fundamentalist or evangelical Christians. This reflects an apparent uptick in the public's perception of her credibility on this issue; a Civil Society Institute (CSI) survey asking the same question in March 2004 in 18 key states found that only 65 percent of Americans recognized Nancy Reagan as a credible spokesperson on stem cell research issues. Today, Nancy Reagan trails only major medical groups (88 percent) in terms of being able to speak out with authority on stem cell research issues.
- ***Overall support for stem cell research is continuing its steady pattern of growth.*** When asked for their initial views with no prompting of medical research that "uses stem cells from human embryos," Americans supported it by a margin of 60 percent-26 percent. This reflects major growth in support from an earlier 2001 survey that asked the same question and found a support level of 48-43 percent.
- ***Support for stem cell research is rapidly approaching bipartisan status.*** The initial question posed about "embryonic stem cell research" found strong majority support among liberals (75 percent) and moderates (67 percent), with conservatives (47 percent) hovering just under the majority level. When the potential benefits of stem cell research were explained in a separate question to those polled, the overall support level rose to 72 percent-23 percent, including backing from moderates at 81 percent and conservatives at 60 percent.
- ***Nearly three in four Americans support expanded federal support for stem cell research.*** A strong 74 percent of those polled expressed their backing for more resources for stem cell research, including 80 percent of moderates and 62 percent of conservatives. Moderates lined up for additional stem cell research by a margin of 80 percent-17 percent, while conservatives supported the proposition by a margin of 62 percent-32 percent.

- *Nearly all Americans (95 percent) were aware of the fact that President Ronald Reagan was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease prior to his death.*

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

METHODOLOGY

The RFA survey results are based upon telephone surveys conducted by Opinion Research Corporation among a national probability sample of 1,017 adults 18 and older living in private households in the continental United States. The survey was conducted June 10-13, 2004, within days of the death of former President Ronald Reagan. The margin of error among all adults is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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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