

## **SURVEY: EXPANDED STEM CELL RESEARCH BACKED BY STRONG MAJORITY OF VOTERS IN 18 STATES**

### ***Independent Voter Support for Ending Bush Limits on Stem Cell Lines is Strong***

**WASHINGTON, D.C.//April 26, 2004//**Two out of three voters in 18 key states support overriding the Bush administration's limits on federal government funding for stem cell research, according to a new survey conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates on behalf of the Results for America (RFA) project of the Civil Society Institute. The survey also shows that a crucial bloc – independent voters – support funding for stem cells over and above the Bush restrictions by a wide 58-point margin (70 percent to 12 percent).

The 18 states covered in the RFA survey are Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maine, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Washington, Oregon, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri and West Virginia.

In August 2001, the Bush administration established a new restriction on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. The restriction means that research on stem cell lines created before August 2001 can receive funding, but funding is prohibited for research on stem cell lines developed after that date. The new survey results show that voters overwhelmingly oppose this restriction and favor funding for research using newer stem cell lines. Fully 65 percent of voters support expanding federal government funding for stem cell lines created after August 2001, including 50 percent who feel strongly, compared with only 17 percent who support maintaining the Bush administration's August 2001 restrictions.

Peter D. Hart Research Associates Senior Vice President Guy Molyneaux said: **“What we really found is this: The center of the electorate clearly embraces the importance of stem cell research. Clearly, the potential of stem cell research to produce treatments for a wide range of diseases and conditions is a very powerful consideration for voters. Even subgroups originally resistant to the idea, such as Evangelicals and Republicans, support stem cell research after hearing a description of the process and potential of the research, despite the explicit recognition of the embryo destruction required. The most convincing argument is that embryonic stem cell research is similar to organ donation in that neither organ donors nor frozen embryos will live and that there is a great medical need for both, with 69 percent finding this ‘very’ or ‘fairly convincing.’”**

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: **“Stem cell research is something that Americans want to see advanced in an ethical and expeditious manner, using fertilized eggs from fertility clinics destined to be discarded for research. Hundreds of millions of Americans are touched directly or indirectly by chronic illnesses and physical conditions that could be cured or treated more effectively as a result of embryonic stem cell research. The vast majority of Americans, regardless of religious affiliation or political party, understand the need for moving ahead with stem cell research. As a student of theology and the parent of a child with Type 1 diabetes, I find these survey findings to be hopeful both on moral grounds and in terms of the prospects for life-saving research.”**

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- ***Nearly all voters have a personal connection to the issue.*** More than two-thirds (68 percent) have some experience with cancer, and more than half (58 percent) have been affected by heart disease. Aside from these two more widespread diseases, 49 percent of voters report having a close personal friend or family member who has suffered from Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, juvenile diabetes, or spinal cord injury – and thus could be affected by medical research on stem cells. Almost nine out of 10 voters (86 percent) report having a family member or close friend who potentially could benefit from stem cell research.
- ***Voters strongly support federal funding for medical research.*** Even when compared with other items such as national defense, transportation, or education, 59 percent of voters say that federal funding for medical research should be a high priority, including 31 percent who say that it should be a very high priority. Another 35 percent say that funding for medical research should be a moderate priority. Just 6 percent do not see medical research funding as a priority for the federal government. Support is higher among Democrats (64 percent) than among Republicans (46 percent), and is highest among the politically important independents (67 percent).
- ***Independents strongly favor stem cell research.*** Democrats and Republicans tend to have different views on embryonic stem cell research in general. Democrats favor stem cell research by a 46-point margin (65 percent to 19 percent), whereas Republicans oppose stem cell research by a narrower nine-point margin (47 percent to 38 percent). However, independents have a view that is much closer to that of Democrats than Republicans. Independent voters favor stem cell research by a 32-point margin (55 percent to 23 percent).
- ***Religion is another strong predictor of voters’ views on stem cell research.*** As expected, support is low among evangelical Protestants (34 percent) but much stronger among mainline Protestants (59 percent). Significantly, Catholics (54 percent) support stem cell research nearly as strongly as the mainline Protestants.
- ***The more people have heard about the issue, the more they support stem cell research.*** Voters who say that they know a lot about the issue support stem cell research by 68 percent to 26 percent, whereas voters who say that they know little about the issue support it by a much smaller 36 percent to 30 percent.
- ***Support grows with more information.*** Support for embryonic stem cell research increases 13 percentage points to 66 percent when people are informed that couples are donating unwanted embryos that otherwise would be discarded. After hearing a more detailed description of embryonic stem cell research and the diseases it can help cure, support grows even more. Overall, three in four (76 percent) voters support stem cell research after hearing the following description: “Embryonic stem cells are special cells that can develop into every type of cell in the human body. The stem cells are extracted from frozen embryos in fertility clinics, donated by couples who no longer want or need the embryo. This process destroys the embryo. These

stem cells can then reproduce on their own, creating what is called a 'line' of stem cells that many researchers can work with. Scientists believe that there is a good chance that stem cells can be developed into cures or treatments for diseases such as cancer, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, juvenile diabetes, and spinal cord injuries."

- ***Arguments for expanded stem cell research are more persuasive than the arguments against it.*** Two-thirds (65 percent) of voters agree that our government should support rather than stand in the way of research that will help ease the suffering of more than 100 million Americans who are suffering from Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other diseases and conditions. A similar level of (63 percent) of voters are convinced by the argument that if embryos that donors no longer need are not used for research, fertility clinics will simply discard them with no benefit to medical research. An equal proportion find the support of the American Medical Association, the National Academy of Science, National Institutes of Health, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the Alzheimer's Association of research on new stem cell lines a convincing reason to lift the August 2001 restrictions on federal funding.

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

## **METHODOLOGY**

From March 24 to 29, 2004, Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted a telephone survey on behalf of the Civil Society Institute. This survey was conducted among registered voters in 18 states and was designed to explore public opinion on federal funding for stem cell research. The states included were Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maine, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Washington, Oregon, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri and West Virginia. With 802 interviews, the margin of error for this survey is plus or minus 3.5 percent, with larger margins of error for subgroups.

## **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. (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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