

Eshoo Votes to Override the President's Veto of Stem Cell Research Bill

July 19, 2006

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WASHINGTON — Rep. Anna G. Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, today voted to override President Bush's veto of H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act.

Rep. Eshoo is an original cosponsor of H.R. 810, which allows federal funding for embryonic stem cell research, and permits researchers to utilize embryos from fertility clinics that would otherwise be discarded. The bill also brings embryonic stem cell research under the National Institutes of Health, ensuring rigorous controls and ethical guidelines on this research that only NIH can implement.

"There is simply no substitute for this legislation," Eshoo said. "Science and ethics can and indeed should be joined, and that's exactly what this bill does."

Over the last five years, medical and scientific experts nationwide have learned about several limitations of the stem cell lines designated for research by President Bush in August 2001. In order for stem cell research to move forward, experts agree that new sources of stem cell lines must be made available. They also call for federal funding to support advanced embryonic stem cell research efforts, which will almost certainly save many thousands of lives and provide hope to millions of Americans afflicted with terrible, debilitating diseases and injuries, including Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, spinal cord injuries, strokes, heart disease, diabetes, burns and arthritis.

"The federal government has a key role to lead, to encourage and to assist in the cutting-edge research which can and will save the lives of our citizens," Eshoo said. "A veto of H.R. 810 only succeeds in preventing life-saving cures from reaching American patients sooner, and prevents the establishment of national standards for this research."

President Bush has long opposed legislation expanding embryonic stem cell research or federal funding, citing moral and ethical concerns about utilizing donated or discarded embryos. Speaking on the President's veto today, Eshoo said, "the President's decision to use his veto pen — the first veto of his Presidency — is a function of political science, not real science."

H.R. 810 passed the House on May 24, 2005, by a vote of 238 to 194, and the Senate on July 18, 2006, by a vote of 63 to 37. The President vetoed the bill on Wednesday, July 19, 2006, prompting the House to consider a veto override proposal. In order to override the President's veto, the measure requires a two-thirds vote in both chambers of Congress. The veto override failed the House by a vote of 235 to 193.

A transcript of Rep. Eshoo's statement is below.

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo

Statement on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in support of

H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act

July 19, 2006

"Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the President has placed the dogmatic views of some of his supporters ahead of sound science, ahead of public health, and ahead of our country's best interests.

"The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act will not merely advance medical science. It will almost certainly save many thousands of lives and provide hope to millions of Americans afflicted with terrible, debilitating diseases and injuries, including Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, spinal cord injuries, strokes, heart disease, diabetes, burns and arthritis.

"I'm proud to be an original cosponsor of this bill and I'm deeply saddened that the President has seen fit to use the first veto of his presidency on this crucial legislation.

"H.R. 810 will bring embryonic stem cell research under the National Institutes of Health, ensuring rigorous controls and ethical guidelines on this research that only NIH can implement.

"Congress has a moral imperative to frame these issues and establish a national policy that integrates the best of science and the highest ethical standards.

"Without this legislation, much of the critical funding for stem-cell research will be available only from the States, from private sources, or from foreign governments who are investing billions in this field.

"If we don't override the President's veto, stem cell research will be curtailed in the United States, but it will not end. Researchers and doctors in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Israel, China, Australia, South Korea, the Czech Republic, and elsewhere are moving full speed ahead on this vital research and will continue to do so.

"If the President's veto of this bill is successful, he will only succeed in preventing life-saving cures from reaching American patients sooner, and prevent the establishment of national standards for this research.

"Mr. Speaker, science and ethics can and indeed should be joined, and this legislation sets out a comprehensive national policy for this vital research.

"The President's veto represents an exercise of political science over real science, and must not be allowed to stand.

"Vote to override this veto."

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