TALKING POINTS FOR ANTICIPATED STEM CELL VOTE

The House Republican leadership recently agreed to hold a debate and vote sometime in the next several weeks on expanding the current federal policy on embryonic stem cell research. In anticipation of this vote, the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research (CAMR, the stem cell coalition, of which AAU is a member) is reaching out to Members of Congress to urge their support for HR 810, the Castle-DeGette bill which would expand the policy for federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.

Following are some talking points to consider when talking with your state delegation about this issue:

- Express that stem cell research issues are very important to the research community and *to your institution*.
- Support HR 810 (ask for Member to cosponsor bill or commit to vote for bill).
- Support House Leadership’s commitment to have a “clean” up-or-down vote on expanding the current federal stem cell policy without extraneous amendments or policy prescriptions (see next point).
- For friendly offices: A vote to expand the federal policy which includes restrictions on other research such as somatic cell nuclear transfer (scnt, also known as therapeutic cloning) is NOT an acceptable position for the university.
- This is not about embryonic stem cell research vs adult stem cell research – we want our scientists to be able to pursue all paths freely.

Current Federal Policy
- of the 78 lines thought to be eligible for federal funding, only 22 are actually available to researchers;
- of those 22, only 5 are held in the United States;
- all the currently approved lines have been kept in media that include animal proteins and so will never be allowed for use as human therapies

Current State of the Research
- new embryonic stem cell lines have been developed using private funds
- it is now possible to develop lines that are not contaminated with animal proteins and can therefore be used in human therapies
- according to NIH Director Zerhouni, the current state-by-state patchwork of policies, "could inhibit critical collaborations between scientists operating under different laws and regulations."

HR 810 - Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005
- bipartisan, Castle-DeGette bill
- over 185 cosponsors
- identical legislation introduced in the Senate, S 471, by Sens Specter and Harkin
- expands the federal policy by dropping the August 9, 2001 deadline
- delineates specific requirements for expanded policy:
  - eligible stem cells must have been derived from donated IVF embryos which would otherwise be discarded.
  - donors must give informed consent
  - donors not compensated for donation
- does not authorize any new funds (doesn’t cost anything)

Additional questions? Contact Jennifer Poulakidas at jennifer.poulakidas@ucdc.edu or Pat White at pat_white@aau.edu.