

June 7, 2007 - Slaughter Votes for Federal Investment in Stem Cell Research

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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House Passes Bipartisan Stem Cell Bill 247 - 176

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, voted once again in support of S. 5, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, which would give hope to millions of Americans by greatly expanding research funding and scientists' access to embryonic stem cell lines.

The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act passed the House of Representatives this afternoon by a strong bipartisan vote of 247 to 176.

"Today Members of Congress, from both sides of the aisle, joined together to put the health of America first," said Rep. Slaughter. "Embryonic stem cell research is one of the most promising fields in modern medical research. Refusing to federally fund research on the great potential this science could bring to treat or cure millions of Americans suffering from diseases and disorders would be unconscionable. The American people support it, the Congress supports it, and it is the right thing to do."

"I believe that we can bring about an entirely new form of healthcare in America - one defined by shorter hospital stays, fewer invasive procedures, and a level of treatment that was previously unimaginable."

Rep. Slaughter, who holds a master's degree in public health and is a microbiologist, has been one of the leading voices in Congress in support of federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. Citing the overwhelming body of scientific research already done in this field, she called upon her fellow Representatives to support the legislation, which passed in the House today.

The House had passed a similar bill (H.R. 3) as part of the "100 Hours Agenda" in January. The Senate then passed S. 5 in April. With House passage of S. 5 today, the bill will be sent directly to the President's desk.

BACKGROUND:

This bill would expand the federal funding of embryonic stem cell research and lift the restrictions on the embryonic stem cell lines that can be used for federally-funded research - restrictions that were imposed by President Bush in 2001. Most of the stem cell lines authorized for federally-funded research under the President's policy are cross-contaminated and not useful for research. The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act only authorizes federal research funds for stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics. The bill also creates an ethical framework that must be followed in conducting this research under the guidance of the National Institutes of Health.

The bill is supported by more than 500 organizations, including the American Medical Association, AARP, Association of American Medical Colleges, and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, as well as many faith-based groups.

A similar stem cell research bill also passed the Congress in the 109th Congress, but unfortunately was vetoed by President Bush in July 2006.

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