

Altmire Votes for Lifesaving, Ethical Stem Cell Research

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Representative Jason Altmire today voted in favor of allowing the continuation of lifesaving stem cell research. S. 5, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007, will increase federal funding for stem cell research that could save or improve the lives of millions of Americans.

The Senate passed S. 5 in April. By passing the measure today with a bipartisan vote of 247 to 176, the House is sending the bill directly to the president's desk.

"Today's vote is a pro-life vote," said Congressman Altmire. "Stem cell research holds the potential for groundbreaking therapies that could treat serious medical conditions like diabetes, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's, and spinal cord injuries. This bill gives hope to millions of Americans who are living with debilitating medical conditions and their loved ones who care for them."

"This legislation will responsibly and ethically expand the number of available embryonic stem cell lines, while exploring alternative forms of stem cell research," said Congressman Altmire. "The potential lifesaving benefits are too important not to explore every avenue of research."

The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act would expand the federal funding of embryonic stem cell research by lifting the restrictions on the embryonic stem cell lines which 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 no longer useful for research. However, the bill only authorizes federal research funds for stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics. The bill creates a strict ethical framework under the guidance of the National Institutes of Health that must be followed in conducting this research. The measure also authorizes the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct and support pluripotent stem cell research - research on stem cells not derived from embryos. It authorizes necessary funding for such research for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2010.

"This bipartisan bill has the support of 72 percent of the American public and of our country's leading scientists, researchers, and patient advocacy groups," added Congressman Altmire. "I truly hope President Bush will listen to the American people and reconsider his threat to veto this legislation in order to allow this lifesaving research to move forward."

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