

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES May 24, 2005 No Federal Funding for Stem Cell Research

Mr. Speaker, the issue of government funding of embryonic stem cell research is one of the most divisive matters facing the country. While I sympathize with those who see embryonic stem cell research as a path to cures for dreadful diseases that have stricken so many Americans, I strongly object to forcing those Americans who believe embryonic stem cell research is immoral to subsidize such research with their tax dollars.

The question that should concern Congress today is: Does the US government have the constitutional authority to fund any form of stem cell research? The clear answer to that question is no. A proper constitutional position would reject federal funding for stem cell research, while allowing individual states and private citizens to decide whether to permit, ban, or fund this research. Therefore, I must vote against HR 810.

Unfortunately, many congressional opponents of embryonic stem cell research disregard the Constitution by supporting HR 2520, an "acceptable" alternative that funds umbilical-cord stem cell research. While this approach is much less objectionable than funding embryonic stem cell research, it is still unconstitutional. Therefore, I must also oppose HR 2520.

Federal funding of medical research guarantees the politicization of decisions about what types of research for what diseases will be funded. Thus, scarce tax resources are allocated according to who has the most effective lobby rather than on the basis of need or even likely success. Federal funding also causes researchers to neglect potential treatments and cures that do not qualify for federal funds. Ironically, an example of this process may be found in HR 2520: some research indicates that adult stem cells may be as useful or more useful to medical science than either embryonic or umbilical cord stem cells. In fact, the supporters of embryonic stem cell research may have a point when they question the effectiveness of umbilical cord stem cells for medical purposes. Yet if HR 2520 becomes law, researchers will have an incentive to turn away from adult stem cell research in order to receive federal funds for umbilical cord stem cell research!

Legal questions relating to ethical dilemmas should be resolved at the local level, as the Constitution provides. Congress should follow the Constitution and reject federal funding of

stem cell research.