

### **Cloning and Stem-Cells: The Fight for Human Dignity**

High above the floor of the chambers of the Missouri Senate is inscribed the following, “free and fair discussion will ever be found the firmest friend to truth.” Though it is perhaps the nature of legislatures to argue, at the end of the day we realize the genius of our founding fathers in setting up a system where ideas proposed to become law must stand up to the piercing light of free and open discussion. It is in this process of open debate that half-truths, innuendos and misconceptions can be revealed and refuted.

As we approach the beginning of the legislative session in January a battle is brewing over the issue of human cloning in Missouri. In the near future I will be filing a bill that seeks to ban this ominous procedure that pushes society well across the invisible ethical line that separates science that promotes human dignity from science that demeans it.

With perhaps no other issue is the opportunity for “free and fair” discussion as desperately needed. This open debate is critical since discussions of cloning inevitably raise issues involving embryonic stem cell research. Fundamentally, the purpose of cloning is to provide a source of human embryos from which these valuable stem cells can be harvested. This harvesting in turn inevitably destroys the living embryo, raising cries of protest from those committed to defending the life of these nascent human beings. On the other side we have some in the research community and their allies in government making bold claims that through this research the cure for human illness is within our grasp. People, they claim, will rise from wheelchairs, Alzheimer’s patients will remember and a host of other ailments will be cured.

One week ago I had the opportunity to sit in on a rare discussion on cloning and stem-cell research where experts from both sides of this debate put their case on the line, defended their positions and took questions from a group of legislators. I could not be more pleased with the results. As one who opposes human cloning in all its forms last week’s debate was a vindication of the fact that the science surrounding stem-cells strongly supports the position I have taken.

In this column over the next few weeks I will be addressing the science on some of the main points of contention in the stem-cell debate in an attempt to shed light on this subject. These points include whether or not cloning creates human life, whether Missouri will suffer irreparable economic loss if we ban embryonic stem-cell research, and whether non-controversial adult stem cell research is medically promising. I believe the science strongly supports the pro-life position I have taken on each of these points and I welcome the opportunity to debate my bill before the Senate in Jefferson City. If “free and fair discussion” is truth’s firmest friend then let the debate begin that the truth may be known.

If you have comments or questions about this week’s column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.state.mo.us](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us) or by phone at (888) 711-9278.