



MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

Matt Bartle
8th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 431
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

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Contact: Todd Scott
(573) 751-1464

Senator Matt Bartle Files Bill to Increase Funding for Ethical Stem Cell Research

JEFFERSON CITY – State Sen. Matt Bartle, R-Lee’s Summit, today sponsored legislation for the 2006 session to fund ethical stem cell research. The bill will provide several million dollars per year for research on stem-cell-rich umbilical cord blood and for research on other sources of non-controversial adult stem cells. Bartle passed legislation in 2005 establishing eligibility criteria for grants to umbilical cord blood banks, and this measure supplies a source of funding for the program.

“This legislation will allow Missouri to conduct scientific research that is both effective and ethical,” Bartle said. “While embryonic stem cell research has no proven cures, this measure will fund research that has already provided valuable treatments.”

Bartle’s legislation will appropriate funding from Missouri’s tobacco settlement, money allocated to Missouri to help pay for Medicaid costs incurred from smoking. The research this would fund is ethical and non-controversial adult stem cell research. Adult stem cells are found throughout the human body and can be harvested without harming the subject. This form of research has provided approximately 65 treatments currently in use.

The funding would not go toward embryonic stem cell research, which is made possible by human cloning (somatic cell nuclear transfer, or SCNT). Embryonic stem cells are found in human embryos, and in order to use those cells scientists have to first kill the human embryo. Embryonic stem cell research has yet to produce any proven cures.

“By using tobacco-settlement funds to advance medical research in Missouri, our state can achieve further progress in the field of medicine without a tax increase,” Bartle said. “This is the ‘Show-Me State,’ and it only makes sense to put funding behind ethical research practices with a proven record of producing medical treatments.”

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Cord blood is rich in valuable stem cells. Bartle passed legislation in 2005 outlining and promoting cord blood collection. However, there is no source of funding for the program. The new legislation will mean increased funding and more stem cells for scientists throughout the United States.

“The successes of the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank, the world’s second-largest cord-blood collection center, show what can be achieved by investing in cord-blood research,” Bartle said. “By focusing on proven methods of research, Missouri can contribute to further breakthroughs in medical science.”

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