

*“Nothing is politically right
which is morally wrong.”*
– Daniel O’Connell



*“Free and fair discussion will ever be
found the firmest friend of truth.”*
– George Campbell

MISSOURI SENATE

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Senator Bill Stouffer on SB 160 Human Cloning and Stem-Cell Research

On the northeast wall of the Missouri Senate Chamber, the words “Nothing is Politically Right that is Morally Wrong” gleam in gold. These words stand out at legislators as the Senate started the debate this week on human cloning. This is a controversial issue that has both bipartisan proponents and opponents debating.

The question is, does Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer, or embryonic stem-cell research, create a life?

In cloning, scientists take a human female egg and remove the nucleus and its 23 chromosomes, leaving it with little genetic material. In its place, they insert the nucleus of a cell from a living human being, which contains the full complement of 46 chromosomes from the donor. (In conception a baby normally gets 23 chromosomes from its father and 23 from its mother). A small electrical current is then applied to the egg and it begins to divide just like an egg fertilized by a male sperm. This new cell is allowed to live and grow for a few days. Then the valuable stem cells it has produced are extracted, destroying it in the process. When scientists in South Korea recently announced they had cloned a human using this procedure, they had no misgivings about correctly identifying their creation as a human embryo.

Opponents to this bill believe this is not a life, but regenerates a part of an already living person, a donor, using some of his or her own cells. By using these cells, opponents believe people in wheelchairs will be able to walk again or Alzheimer’s will be cured. They also maintain if embryonic stem-cell research is not allowed it will hurt the economy.

Proponents of embryonic stem-cell research believe a life is being created and then destroyed. However, they also believe that adult stem-cell research can be just as successful as embryonic stem-cell research. There is adult stem-cell research that has had great success. In fact, adult stem-cell research has created more than fifty procedures while embryonic stem-cell research has not created any. These procedures include treatments for cancer, leukemia, multiple sclerosis, sickle cell anemia, spinal cord injuries and arthritis.

Countries and states that have outlawed embryonic stem-cell research have not seen a decrease in the economy, but an increase in the biotech industry. For instance, Germany has emerged as the leading European nation in the area of biotechnology, while strengthening laws to protect human embryos through cloning or natural conception. States such as Michigan do not allow research on human embryos whether created through cloning or fertilization. Yet over seventy new companies in the last three years began life science work in the state earning them the distinction of being the fastest growing area in the nation in life science research.

The ending question becomes this: Why are we allowing doctors to continue research on a controversial matter that has not shown any progression when they could start focusing on adult stem-cell research and build on the fifty plus procedures they have already developed.

If you have questions or comments about this issue or any other issue please feel free to call toll free at 866-768-3987 or email bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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