



BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN: CHAMPIONS FOR STEM CELL RESEARCH

"All over the country, patients and their families are waiting today for Congress and the president to open the door to the cures of tomorrow. At the dawn of the 21st century, we should approach this research with the same passion and commitment that have led to so many cures and saved so many lives throughout our history."

[Barack Obama, Speech in Washington, DC, 6/17/06]

"It is essential that the federal government play a role in funding and overseeing the conduct of human embryonic stem cell research. In addition, Presidential leadership and commitment is needed to ensure that the results of research will be accessible to the public."

[Harold Varmus, MD, President and CEO of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Former Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and co-recipient of a Nobel Prize for studies of the genetic basis of cancer, 10/16/08]

Human embryonic stem cells have great potential for treating a wide variety of diseases and health conditions and for providing new insights into human development and disease. An Obama Administration will reverse the Bush Administration's ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research on cell lines created after August 9, 2001 by executive order and will allow all scientists to participate in this important new field, in accord with the rigorous ethical guidelines proposed by the National Research Council.

Barack Obama and Joe Biden believe we owe it to the American public to explore the potential of stem cell biology to seek new ways to treat the millions of people suffering from debilitating and life-threatening diseases. Stem cell-based therapies hold great promise for people suffering from more than 70 major diseases and conditions such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, traumatic spinal cord injuries, diabetes, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus, and more. The Democratic platform calls for an expansion of stem cell research. By contrast, the Republican platform would take us backwards, calling for a ban on the creation of and experimentation on human embryos for research purposes, including a total ban on even private funding for embryonic on stem cell research.

Obama-Biden Support Stem Cell Research

In their administration, Obama and Biden would:

Promote Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Despite recent advances on induced pluripotent stem cells, adult stem cell and cord blood stem cells, embryonic stem cells remain the gold standard, unmatched in their potential to develop into any type of cell in the body. Barack Obama has been a long-term supporter of greater stem cell research. He introduced legislation while a member of the Illinois Senate that specifically permitted embryonic stem cell research in Illinois.

Support Medical Advancement and Innovation: Restrictions on federal funding for stem cell research have limited the study of stem cells in this country and have encouraged some leading researchers in the field to move to other countries. Barack Obama believes that all scientists in this country should be able to work in this vibrant new field and that every American should have access to potential therapeutic advances. He cosponsored legislation in 2006 introduced by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) that would have allowed greater federal government funding on a wider array of stem cell lines. Despite the overwhelming bipartisan support from the public and members of Congress, President Bush used the first veto of his presidency to reject the legislation. Obama has joined the fight to reopen the debate on stem cell research.

Expand the Number of Stem Cell Lines Available for Research: There are over 400,000 embryos being stored in over 400 facilities throughout the United States, the majority of which are reserved for infertile couples. However, many of these embryos will go unused, destined for permanent storage in a freezer or disposal. In 2001, President Bush restricted federal money for research on embryonic stem cell lines to those that already existed. Estimated to be about 78 at that time, the number of viable stem cell lines available is much less. Barack Obama supports expanding and accelerating research using new stem cell lines that have been developed with other sources of funding and will be created in the future. He is a cosponsor of the current Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act that would allow research on more stem cells derived from embryos donated for in vitro fertilization. His plan would reverse the president's policy that has allowed hundreds of thousands of frozen embryos, left over from in vitro fertilization, to simply be discarded instead of being used to potentially save lives.

Ensure Ethical Standards: Barack Obama understands stem cell research needs to be conducted with the highest ethical standards. The stem cell legislation Barack Obama introduced in the Illinois State Senate established review of this research by the Illinois Department of Public Health. The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act maintains high ethical standards by ensuring that only those embryos that would otherwise be discarded could be used and that the donors would have to provide written consent for the use of the embryos. Barack Obama also supports greater research to explore the viability of adult stem cells, cord blood cells, and induced pluripotent stem cells.