

A Critical Reading Of This Information Finds:

- 1 Research using stem cells taken from human embryos was already allowed in Michigan prior to 2008 and Proposal 2. It had been occurring at the University of Michigan with federal funds since 2003. Michigan had a law which banned using and killing human embryos for research. This law didn't prevent researchers from importing and experimenting on embryonic stem cells.
- 2 Embryonic stem cell research was already allowed in Michigan prior to Proposal 2.
- 3 Proposal 2 is a constitutional amendment which legalized killing human embryos for research in Michigan. No legislation can roll back a constitutional amendment.
- 4 The lead sponsor of the House Joint Resolution II is Jim Slezak, a Democrat.
- 5 Their amendment states that the term "person" applies to all human beings regardless of their biological development.
- 6 The legislative language which requires researchers to determine a human embryo has a less than 50% chance of survival only relates to human embryos researchers deem "not suitable for implantation." Proposal 2 provided no definition for this term, so this legislation attempts to provide a definition.

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Michigan Senate aims to ignore people on stem-cell research

By Jack Lessenberry

LANSING - A year ago, the most intense campaign in Michigan was not the race for the presidency but the battle over

- 1 whether to change the state constitution to allow research using stem cells taken from human embryos created in fertility clinics.

Both sides spent millions trying to sway the voters but in the end, Michigan voted decisively (53 percent to 47 percent) to

- 2 allow embryonic stem-cell research. That, you might think, settled that.

- 3 But now a small band of lawmakers in the state House and Senate dedicated to either rolling back the will of the people or throwing enough restrictions in the way that stem-cell research would be practically impossible.

Former U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz (R., Battle Creek) perhaps said it best: "They couldn't stop it at the ballot box, so they're trying to stop it by throwing a regulatory banner at the research."

- 4 The effort in the House is more transparent. Earlier this month, a group of 23 mostly Republican lawmakers introduced a joint resolution calling for yet another constitutional amendment that would repeal the one passed last year. Their amendment would say that any fertilized egg has the same
- 5 rights as an adult, and would appear to make embryonic stem-cell research tantamount to murder. What is unclear is whether lab technicians who routinely discard such embryos would also be guilty of homicide. However, it is clear that the joint resolution has no chance of being placed on the ballot, since the House is solidly controlled by mostly pro-stem cell Democrats. What's happening in the Senate, however, has more potential to be disruptive.

Republicans control the Senate, and Sen. Tom George of Kalamazoo, who chairs the Health Policy Committee, opposes embryonic stem-cell research. He has been holding hearings on a six-bill package that he says is necessary to regulate stem-cell research. He argues that legislators have a responsibility to "define and clarify" how the amendment would work. But stem-cell supporters say that's not what is going on. They say his package of bills is designed to thwart research by making it impossible. For example: One of his bills would

- 6 require researchers to determine that an embryo would have less than a 50 percent chance of survival before using it for research.

AND THERE'S MORE (see next page)

- 7 If scientists can't determine what chances embryos have of surviving in a womb then how can they determine that the embryos are "not suitable for implantation?"
- 8 The proposed legislation doesn't make any kind of stem cell research in Michigan illegal. Legislation can't do that because Proposal 2 was a constitutional amendment. Legislation can't overrule a constitutional amendment. Morrison might be referring to a part of the legislation which prevents him from importing cloned human embryos into Michigan.
- 9 Only one of the numerous grants has anything to do with human embryonic stem cell research and the University of Michigan press release touting these grants admits the one human embryonic stem cell research project would have been allowed before Proposal 2 passed.
- 10 Not all scientists believe the hype around embryonic stem cells. Embryonic stem cells have yet to successfully treat a single person. The only approved early clinical trial using human embryonic stem cells has been delayed until at least the third quarter of 2010 because animal research showed cyst where the cells were injected.
- 11 The Embryo Research & Fertility Clinic Transparency Act doesn't attempt to inhibit stem cell research, but merely attempts to provide sensible definitions for undefined terms and provide some transparency to and state regulation of embryonic stem cell research and IVF clinics.

- 7 Scientists say that is impossible to determine. Fewer than half of all implanted embryos actually become babies. And under current law, all embryos donated to stem-cell research have no chance of becoming babies anyway. If not donated, they are destined to be discarded or destroyed by clinics.

Michigan's leading stem-cell researcher, Dr. Sean Morrison, said what the Senate was trying to do contradicts the measure voters approved. "Those bills would impede the development of the life sciences sector in Michigan, but making it illegal to

- 8 pursue mainstream forms of medical research that are widely accepted throughout the rest of the country," Dr. Morrison, who heads the University of Michigan's Center for Stem Cell Biology, told the Associated Press.

Last fall, those supporting Proposal 2, the amendment allowing embryonic stem-cell research, said it would be economically beneficial to Michigan. That pledge seems to have been

- 9 As of last week, the University of Michigan had been awarded \$6.8 million in federal stimulus grants for this research.
- 10 Scientists believe that embryonic stem-cell research holds potential for helping arrest and reverse the effects of various diseases, and perhaps even help repair crippling spinal cord injuries.
- 11 Whether the Senate will pass any bills trying to inhibit stem-cell research is unclear. Even if they do, their chances of success in the House are likely to be poor, and they could also face a veto from Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Supporters of the research say all this may be moot, because any attempt to prevent or limit stem-cell research is likely unconstitutional.

One might think with the state's economy and its finances in deep crisis, Michigan lawmakers would have better things to do.