

LARSON BACKS EXPANDED FEDERAL FUNDING FOR STEM CELL RESEARCH

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) today voted in favor of H.R. 3, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007. Larson joined 210 of his colleagues as an original cosponsor of H.R. 3. The bill passed with a bipartisan vote of 253 to 174.

Larson stated: "Democrats promised that they would offer Americans hope and take our country in a new direction. Today we can give hope to over 100 million Americans suffering from debilitating or life-threatening diseases. Stem cells provide a unique promise for curing and treating disease and the President's 2001 policy has proven to be a failure.

"Each year, people suffering from chronic and debilitating diseases and their families come to Washington from around the country to advocate for stem cell research. They are affected by such diseases as Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and ALS. Among that group are my constituents and residents of Connecticut who come to my office each year with the hope that expanding federal funding for stem cell research can find a cure or treatment for the disease affecting them or their loved ones. It will be gratifying to tell them that the 110th Congress acted on this issue within the first 100 hours. However, we all have work to do to convince the President of the importance of this legislation."

The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act would expand the federal funding of embryonic stem cell research by lifting the restrictions on the embryonic stem cell lines which can be used for federally-funded research – restrictions that were imposed by President Bush in 2001. Most of the stem cell lines authorized for federally-funded research under the President's policy are now no longer useful for research. However, the bill only authorizes federal research funds for stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics. H.R. 3 also creates an ethical framework that must be followed in conducting this research under the guidance of the National Institutes of Health.

During the 109th Congress, this bill passed the House of Representatives, with Larson voting in favor of it, in May of 2005 and the Senate in July 2006, but was vetoed by President Bush.

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