INTEREST GROUP 4: PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE PRESIDENT'S BIOETHICS COUNCIL (One group or two?)

The President of the United States is not simply an “interest group,” but the president does frequently lobby Congress and has many ways to influence the shape of proposed legislation and the nature of Congressional Debate. On issues involving medical and life-science research, the President receives advice from the President’s Council on Bioethics. You are asked to read (1) President Bush’s 2001 statement concerning stem cell research, and (2) a portion of a report from the President’s Council on Bioethics evaluating alternatives to stem cell research. Your group will have access to the complete report, which you may find interesting and useful for reference, but you are only asked to read the concluding section.

Your task is to craft a presentation that represents the President’s view, incorporating the advice of the Bioethics Council as you see fit. You may frame your remarks as a presentation to the Senate to explain and justify the President’s position on this issue.

READING 1: President Bush’s Statement Regarding Stem Cell Research


The Bush Ranch, Crawford, Texas August 9, 2001 8:01 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good evening. I appreciate you giving me a few minutes of your time tonight so I can discuss with you a complex and difficult issue, an issue that is one of the most profound of our time.

The issue of research involving stem cells derived from human embryos is increasingly the subject of a national debate and dinner table discussions. The issue is confronted every day in laboratories as scientists ponder the ethical ramifications of their work. It is agonized over by parents and many couples as they try to have children, or to save children already born.

The issue is debated within the church, with people of different faiths, even many of the same faith coming to different conclusions. Many people are finding that the more they know about stem cell research, the less certain they are about the right ethical and moral conclusions.

My administration must decide whether to allow federal funds, your tax dollars, to be used for scientific research on stem cells derived from human embryos. A large number of these embryos already exist. They are the product of a process called in vitro fertilization, which helps so many couples conceive children. When doctors match sperm and egg to create life outside the womb, they usually produce more embryos than are
planted in the mother. Once a couple successfully has children, or if they are unsuccessful, the additional embryos remain frozen in laboratories.

Some will not survive during long storage; others are destroyed. A number have been donated to science and used to create privately funded stem cell lines. And a few have been implanted in an adoptive mother and born, and are today healthy children.

Based on preliminary work that has been privately funded, scientists believe further research using stem cells offers great promise that could help improve the lives of those who suffer from many terrible diseases -- from juvenile diabetes to Alzheimer's, from Parkinson's to spinal cord injuries. And while scientists admit they are not yet certain, they believe stem cells derived from embryos have unique potential.

You should also know that stem cells can be derived from sources other than embryos -- from adult cells, from umbilical cords that are discarded after babies are born, from human placenta. And many scientists feel research on these type of stem cells is also promising. Many patients suffering from a range of diseases are already being helped with treatments developed from adult stem cells.

However, most scientists, at least today, believe that research on embryonic stem cells offer the most promise because these cells have the potential to develop in all of the tissues in the body.

Scientists further believe that rapid progress in this research will come only with federal funds. Federal dollars help attract the best and brightest scientists. They ensure new discoveries are widely shared at the largest number of research facilities and that the research is directed toward the greatest public good.

The United States has a long and proud record of leading the world toward advances in science and medicine that improve human life. And the United States has a long and proud record of upholding the highest standards of ethics as we expand the limits of science and knowledge. Research on embryonic stem cells raises profound ethical questions, because extracting the stem cell destroys the embryo, and thus destroys its potential for life. Like a snowflake, each of these embryos is unique, with the unique genetic potential of an individual human being.

As I thought through this issue, I kept returning to two fundamental questions: First, are these frozen embryos human life, and therefore, something precious to be protected? And second, if they're going to be destroyed anyway, shouldn't they be used for a greater good, for research that has the potential to save and improve other lives?

I've asked those questions and others of scientists, scholars, bioethicists, religious leaders, doctors, researchers, members of Congress, my Cabinet, and my friends. I have read heartfelt letters from many Americans. I have given this issue a great deal of thought, prayer and considerable reflection. And I have found widespread disagreement.
On the first issue, are these embryos human life -- well, one researcher told me he believes this five-day-old cluster of cells is not an embryo, not yet an individual, but a pre-embryo. He argued that it has the potential for life, but it is not a life because it cannot develop on its own.

An ethicist dismissed that as a callous attempt at rationalization. Make no mistake, he told me, that cluster of cells is the same way you and I, and all the rest of us, started our lives. One goes with a heavy heart if we use these, he said, because we are dealing with the seeds of the next generation.

And to the other crucial question, if these are going to be destroyed anyway, why not use them for good purpose -- I also found different answers. Many argue these embryos are byproducts of a process that helps create life, and we should allow couples to donate them to science so they can be used for good purpose instead of wasting their potential. Others will argue there's no such thing as excess life, and the fact that a living being is going to die does not justify experimenting on it or exploiting it as a natural resource.

At its core, this issue forces us to confront fundamental questions about the beginnings of life and the ends of science. It lies at a difficult moral intersection, juxtaposing the need to protect life in all its phases with the prospect of saving and improving life in all its stages. As the discoveries of modern science create tremendous hope, they also lay vast ethical mine fields. As the genius of science extends the horizons of what we can do, we increasingly confront complex questions about what we should do. We have arrived at that brave new world that seemed so distant in 1932, when Aldous Huxley wrote about human beings created in test tubes in what he called a "hatchery."

In recent weeks, we learned that scientists have created human embryos in test tubes solely to experiment on them. This is deeply troubling, and a warning sign that should prompt all of us to think through these issues very carefully.

Embryonic stem cell research is at the leading edge of a series of moral hazards. The initial stem cell researcher was at first reluctant to begin his research, fearing it might be used for human cloning. Scientists have already cloned a sheep. Researchers are telling us the next step could be to clone human beings to create individual designer stem cells, essentially to grow another you, to be available in case you need another heart or lung or liver.

I strongly oppose human cloning, as do most Americans. We recoil at the idea of growing human beings for spare body parts, or creating life for our convenience. And while we must devote enormous energy to conquering disease, it is equally important that we pay attention to the moral concerns raised by the new frontier of human embryo stem cell research. Even the most noble ends do not justify any means.

My position on these issues is shaped by deeply held beliefs. I'm a strong supporter of science and technology, and believe they have the potential for incredible good -- to
improve lives, to save life, to conquer disease. Research offers hope that millions of our loved ones may be cured of a disease and rid of their suffering. I have friends whose children suffer from juvenile diabetes. Nancy Reagan has written me about President Reagan’s struggle with Alzheimer’s. My own family has confronted the tragedy of childhood leukemia. And, like all Americans, I have great hope for cures.

I also believe human life is a sacred gift from our Creator. I worry about a culture that devalues life, and believe as your President I have an important obligation to foster and encourage respect for life in America and throughout the world. And while we’re all hopeful about the potential of this research, no one can be certain that the science will live up to the hope it has generated.

Eight years ago, scientists believed fetal tissue research offered great hope for cures and treatments -- yet, the progress to date has not lived up to its initial expectations. Embryonic stem cell research offers both great promise and great peril. So I have decided we must proceed with great care.

As a result of private research, more than 60 genetically diverse stem cell lines already exist. They were created from embryos that have already been destroyed, and they have the ability to regenerate themselves indefinitely, creating ongoing opportunities for research. I have concluded that we should allow federal funds to be used for research on these existing stem cell lines, where the life and death decision has already been made.

Leading scientists tell me research on these 60 lines has great promise that could lead to breakthrough therapies and cures. This allows us to explore the promise and potential of stem cell research without crossing a fundamental moral line, by providing taxpayer funding that would sanction or encourage further destruction of human embryos that have at least the potential for life.

I also believe that great scientific progress can be made through aggressive federal funding of research on umbilical cord placenta, adult and animal stem cells which do not involve the same moral dilemma. This year, your government will spend $250 million on this important research.

I will also name a President’s council to monitor stem cell research, to recommend appropriate guidelines and regulations, and to consider all of the medical and ethical ramifications of biomedical innovation. This council will consist of leading scientists, doctors, ethicists, lawyers, theologians and others, and will be chaired by Dr. Leon Kass, a leading biomedical ethicist from the University of Chicago.

This council will keep us apprised of new developments and give our nation a forum to continue to discuss and evaluate these important issues. As we go forward, I hope we will always be guided by both intellect and heart, by both our capabilities and our conscience. I have made this decision with great care, and I pray it is the right one. Thank you for listening. Good night, and God bless America.
Fact Sheet: President Bush's Stem Cell Research Policy

Today, The President Signed A Bill That Draws A Clear Line Against One Of The Most Egregious Abuses In Biomedical Research And Vetoed A Bill That Attempts To Overturn His Balanced Stem Cell Research Policy:

- The President Signed The "Fetus Farming Prohibition Act," Which Prohibits Trafficking In Human Fetuses That Are Created With The Sole Intent Of Aborting Them To Harvest Their Parts.

- The President Vetoed H.R. 810, Which Would Overturn The Balanced Policy On Embryonic Stem Cell Research That The Administration Has Followed For The Past Five Years. This bill would also reverse the principle that Congress itself has followed for more than a decade, when each year it has prohibited Federal funding for research that destroys human embryos.
  - If This Bill Were To Become Law, American Taxpayers Would For The First Time In Our History Be Compelled To Fund The Deliberate Destruction Of Human Embryos. The President has made it clear to Congress he will not allow our Nation to cross this moral line. If we are to find the right ways to advance ethical medical research, we must also be willing to reject the wrong ways when necessary.

- President Bush Is Disappointed Congress Failed To Pass A Bill That Would Have Authorized Additional Federal Funding For Promising New Research That Could Produce Cells With The Abilities Of Embryonic Cells, But Without The Destruction Of Human Embryos. This bill was unanimously approved by the Senate and received 273 votes in the House of Representatives, but it was blocked by a minority in the House using procedural maneuvers.
  - It Makes No Sense To Say You Are In Favor Of Finding Cures For Terrible Diseases As Quickly As Possible And Then Block A Bill That Would Provide Funding For Promising And Ethical Stem Cell Research.
  - The President Is Directing The HHS Secretary And NIH Director To Use All The Tools At Their Disposal To Aid The Search For Stem Cell Techniques That Advance Promising Medical Science In An Ethical And Morally Responsible Way.
President Bush Is The First President To Provide Federal Funding For Embryonic Stem Cell Research

In 2001, President Bush Set Forth A New Policy On Stem Cell Research That Struck A Balance Between The Needs Of Science And The Demands Of Conscience. In this new era, our challenge is to harness the power of science to ease human suffering without sanctioning practices that violate the dignity of human life.

- When The President Took Office, There Was No Federal Funding For Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research.

- Under The Policy Announced Five Years Ago, This Administration Became The First To Make Federal Funds Available For This Research. Federal funding was made available for research only on human embryonic stem cell lines derived from embryos that had been destroyed before the announcement of the President's policy. The Administration has made available more than $90 million for research on these lines, allowing important research to go forward without using taxpayer funds to encourage the further deliberate destruction of human embryos.

Finding New Cures For Disease Does Not Require Destroying Human Embryos

Today, The President Met With Children Who Began Their Lives As Frozen Embryos Created For In Vitro Fertilization. These children were adopted while still embryos, and have been blessed with the chance to grow up in a loving family. They remind us of what is lost when embryos are destroyed in the name of research, that we all began our lives as a small collection of cells, and that America must never abandon our fundamental moral principles in our zeal for new treatments and cures.

Embryonic Stem Cells Come From Human Embryos That Are Destroyed For Their Cells. Each of these human embryos is a unique human life, with inherent dignity and matchless value.

With The Right Techniques And Policies, We Can Achieve Scientific Progress While Living Up To Our Ethical Responsibilities. America was founded on the principle that we are all created equal, and endowed by our Creator with the right to life. We can advance the cause of science while upholding this founding principle.

Since The President Announced His Policy In 2001, Advances In Scientific Research Have Also Shown The Great Potential Of Stem Cells That Are Derived Without Harming Human Embryos. The Administration has expanded the funding of research into stem cells that can be drawn from children, adults, and the blood in umbilical cords, with no harm to the donor - and these stem cells are already being used in medical treatments.
Researchers Are Now Also Investigating New Techniques That Could Allow Doctors And Scientists To Produce Stem Cells Just As Versatile As Those Derived From Human Embryos Without Requiring The Destruction Of These Embryos. One technique scientists are exploring would involve "reprogramming" an adult cell - for example, a skin cell - to function like an embryonic stem cell.

**President Bush's Balanced Approach To Stem Cell Research Has Worked**

The President's Policy Has Allowed Science To Explore The Potential Of Embryonic Stem Cells - And It Has Allowed America To Continue To Lead The World In This Area. Under the President's policy, 21 human embryonic stem cell lines are currently available for Federal funding, and are in use. Each of these lines can be replicated many times. As a result, the National Institutes of Health have helped make more than 700 shipments to researchers since 2001.

There Is No Ban On Embryonic Stem Cell Research. To the contrary, even critics of the President's policy concede that these Federally funded lines are being used in research every day by scientists across the world.


The President Believes We Must Continue To Explore Hopeful Alternatives And Advance The Cause Of Scientific Research While Staying True To The Ideals Of A Decent And Humane Society. At a moment when ethical alternatives are becoming available, we cannot lose the opportunity to conduct research that would give hope to those suffering from terrible diseases and help move our Nation beyond the current controversies over embryonic stem cell research.

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The East Room

2:08 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. Congress has just passed and sent to my desk two bills concerning the use of stem cells in biomedical research. These bills illustrate both the promise and perils we face in the age of biotechnology. In this new era, our challenge is to harness the power of science to ease human suffering without sanctioning the practices that violate the dignity of human life. (Applause.)

In 2001, I spoke to the American people and set forth a new policy on stem cell research that struck a balance between the needs of science and the demands of conscience. When I took office, there was no federal funding for human embryonic stem cell research. Under the policy I announced five years ago, my administration became the first to make federal funds available for this research, yet only on embryonic stem cell lines derived from embryos that had already been destroyed.

My administration has made available more than $90 million for research on these lines. This policy has allowed important research to go forward without using taxpayer funds to encourage the further deliberate destruction of human embryos.

One of the bills Congress has passed builds on the progress we have made over the last five years. So I signed it into law. (Applause.) Congress has also passed a second bill that attempts to overturn the balanced policy I set. This bill would support the taking of innocent human life in the hope of finding medical benefits for others. It crosses a moral boundary that our decent society needs to respect, so I vetoed it. (Applause.)

Like all Americans, I believe our nation must vigorously pursue the tremendous possibility that science offers to cure disease and improve the lives of millions. We have opportunities to discover cures and treatments that were unthinkable generations ago. Some scientists believe that one source of these cures might be embryonic stem cell research. Embryonic stem cells have the ability to grow into specialized adult tissues, and this may give them the potential to replace damaged or defective cells or body parts and treat a variety of diseases.

Yet we must also remember that embryonic stem cells come from human embryos that are destroyed for their cells. Each of these human embryos is a unique human life with inherent dignity and matchless value. We see that value in the children who are with us today. Each of these children began his or her life as a frozen embryo that was created for in vitro fertilization, but remained unused after the fertility treatments were complete.
Each of these children was adopted while still an embryo, and has been blessed with the chance to grow up in a loving family.

These boys and girls are not spare parts. (Applause.) They remind us of what is lost when embryos are destroyed in the name of research. They remind us that we all begin our lives as a small collection of cells. And they remind us that in our zeal for new treatments and cures, America must never abandon our fundamental morals.

Some people argue that finding new cures for disease requires the destruction of human embryos like the ones that these families adopted. I disagree. I believe that with the right techniques and the right policies, we can achieve scientific progress while living up to our ethical responsibilities. That's what I sought in 2001, when I set forth my administration's policy allowing federal funding for research on embryonic stem cell lines where the life and death decision had already been made.

This balanced approach has worked. Under this policy, 21 human embryonic stem cell lines are currently in use in research that is eligible for federal funding. Each of these lines can be replicated many times. And as a result, the National Institutes of Health have helped make more than 700 shipments to researchers since 2001. There is no ban on embryonic stem cell research. To the contrary, even critics of my policy concede that these federally funded lines are being used in research every day by scientists around the world. My policy has allowed us to explore the potential of embryonic stem cells, and it has allowed America to continue to lead the world in this area.

Since I announced my policy in 2001, advances in scientific research have also shown the great potential of stem cells that are derived without harming human embryos. My administration has expanded the funding of research into stem cells that can be drawn from children, adults, and the blood in umbilical cords, with no harm to the donor. And these stem cells are already being used in medical treatments.

With us today are patients who have benefited from treatments with adult and umbilical-cord-blood stem cells. And I want to thank you all for coming. (Applause.)

They are living proof that effective medical science can also be ethical. Researchers are now also investigating new techniques that could allow doctors and scientists to produce stem cells just as versatile as those derived from human embryos. One technique scientists are exploring would involve reprogramming an adult cell. For example, a skin cell to function like an embryonic stem cell. Science offers the hope that we may one day enjoy the potential benefits of embryonic stem cells without destroying human life.

We must continue to explore these hopeful alternatives and advance the cause of scientific research while staying true to the ideals of a decent and humane society. The bill I sign today upholds these humane ideals and draws an important ethical line to guide our research. The Fetus Farming Prohibition Act was sponsored by Senators Santorum and Brownback -- both who are here. (Applause.) And by Congressman Dave Weldon, along with Nathan Deal. Thank you, Congressmen. (Applause.) This good law prohibits
one of the most egregious abuses in biomedical research, the trafficking in human fetuses that are created with the sole intent of aborting them to harvest their parts. Human beings are not a raw material to be exploited, or a commodity to be bought or sold, and this bill will help ensure that we respect the fundamental ethical line.

I'm disappointed that Congress failed to pass another bill that would have promoted good research. This bill was sponsored by Senator Santorum and Senator Arlen Specter and Congressman Roscoe Bartlett. Thanks for coming, Roscoe. (Applause.) It would have authorized additional federal funding for promising new research that could produce cells with the abilities of embryonic cells, but without the destruction of human embryos. This is an important piece of legislation. This bill was approved by the Senate; it received 273 votes in the House of Representatives, but was blocked by a minority in the House using procedural maneuvers. I'm disappointed that the House failed to authorize funding for this vital and ethical research.

It makes no sense to say that you're in favor of finding cures for terrible diseases as quickly as possible, and then block a bill that would authorize funding for promising and ethical stem cell research. At a moment when ethical alternatives are becoming available, we cannot lose the opportunity to conduct research that would give hope to those suffering from terrible diseases, and help move our nation beyond the current controversies over embryonic stem cell research.

We must pursue this research. And so I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Secretary Leavitt, and the Director of the National Institutes of Health to use all the tools at their disposal to aid the search for stem cell techniques that advance promising medical science in an ethical and morally responsible way. (Applause.)

Unfortunately, Congress has sent me a bill that fails to meet this ethical test. This legislation would overturn the balanced policy on embryonic stem cell research that my administration has followed for the past five years. This bill would also undermine the principle that Congress, itself, has followed for more than a decade, when it has prohibited federal funding for research that destroys human embryos.

If this bill would have become law, American taxpayers would, for the first time in our history, be compelled to fund the deliberate destruction of human embryos. And I'm not going to allow it. (Applause.)

I made it clear to the Congress that I will not allow our nation to cross this moral line. I felt like crossing this line would be a mistake, and once crossed, we would find it almost impossible to turn back. Crossing the line would needlessly encourage a conflict between science and ethics that can only do damage to both, and to our nation as a whole. If we're to find the right ways to advance ethical medical research, we must also be willing, when necessary, to reject the wrong ways. So today, I'm keeping the promise I made to the American people by returning this bill to Congress with my veto.
As science brings us ever closer to unlocking the secrets of human biology, it also offers temptations to manipulate human life and violate human dignity. Our conscience and history as a nation demand that we resist this temptation. America was founded on the principle that we are all created equal, and endowed by our Creator with the right to life. We can advance the cause of science while upholding this founding promise. We can harness the promise of technology without becoming slaves to technology. And we can ensure that science serves the cause of humanity instead of the other way around.

America pursues medical advances in the name of life, and we will achieve the great breakthroughs we all seek with reverence for the gift of life. I believe America's scientists have the ingenuity and skill to meet this challenge. And I look forward to working with Congress and the scientific community to achieve these great and noble goals in the years ahead.

Thank you all for coming and may God bless. (Applause.)

END 2:23 P.M. EDT
READING 4: President’s Veto Statement regarding H.R. 810, 19 July 2006

Accessed 31 Jan 2007

Message to the House of Representatives

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 810, the "Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005."

Like all Americans, I believe our Nation must vigorously pursue the tremendous possibilities that science offers to cure disease and improve the lives of millions. Yet, as science brings us ever closer to unlocking the secrets of human biology, it also offers temptations to manipulate human life and violate human dignity. Our conscience and history as a Nation demand that we resist this temptation. With the right scientific techniques and the right policies, we can achieve scientific progress while living up to our ethical responsibilities.

In 2001, I set forth a new policy on stem cell research that struck a balance between the needs of science and the demands of conscience. When I took office, there was no Federal funding for human embryonic stem cell research. Under the policy I announced 5 years ago, my Administration became the first to make Federal funds available for this research, but only on embryonic stem cell lines derived from embryos that had already been destroyed. My Administration has made available more than $90 million for research of these lines. This policy has allowed important research to go forward and has allowed America to continue to lead the world in embryonic stem cell research without encouraging the further destruction of living human embryos.

H.R. 810 would overturn my Administration's balanced policy on embryonic stem cell research. If this bill were to become law, American taxpayers for the first time in our history would be compelled to fund the deliberate destruction of human embryos. Crossing this line would be a grave mistake and would needlessly encourage a conflict between science and ethics that can only do damage to both and harm our Nation as a whole.

Advances in research show that stem cell science can progress in an ethical way. Since I announced my policy in 2001, my Administration has expanded funding of research into stem cells that can be drawn from children, adults, and the blood in umbilical cords with no harm to the donor, and these stem cells are currently being used in medical treatments. Science also offers the hope that we may one day enjoy the potential benefits of embryonic stem cells without destroying human life. Researchers are investigating new techniques that might allow doctors and scientists to produce stem cells just as versatile as those derived from human embryos without harming life. We must continue to explore
these hopeful alternatives, so we can advance the cause of scientific research while staying true to the ideals of a decent and humane society.

I hold to the principle that we can harness the promise of technology without becoming slaves to technology and ensure that science serves the cause of humanity. If we are to find the right ways to advance ethical medical research, we must also be willing when necessary to reject the wrong ways. For that reason, I must veto this bill.

GEORGE W. BUSH

THE WHITE HOUSE,