

STEM CELL LEGISLATION

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the question currently before the Senate regarding whether or not to allow federal funding for embryonic stem cell research.

It is clear from the last two days of debate in the Senate that people on both sides of this issue have very strong feelings about their positions, and rightly so. This is an extremely important issue that raises a whole host of questions to which there are no easy answers.

On one hand, we must consider the fundamental question of how to treat potential human life. On the other, we must consider the vast potential of a scientific field that could greatly improve millions of actual human lives and save millions more. When the stakes are this high, we are obligated to have an honest, open, and thorough debate.

In keeping with the gravity of these questions and the potential ramifications of how we answer them, I believe that both the government and the scientific community should address them responsibly.

Like millions of other American families, my family has been touched by the ache of loss brought about by Alzheimer's disease. My father died of complications only a few years ago. At the end of his life, I wanted nothing more than to be able to help ease his suffering. Now, as I reflect on that difficult time, I think of the families that are currently enduring the same pain mine did, and I want to help them.

I trust the vast majority of the scientific community that believes embryonic stem cell research may hold the key to the cures these families are seeking. I also believe that our government can work to promote this science responsibly by paving the way for treatments that will save millions of lives without destroying others.

Toward that end, I believe the legislation passed by the House represents a measured, responsible step toward tapping into the vast potential that embryonic stem cell research has with respect to finding cures for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes and a wide range of other devastating diseases.

In millions of cases, H.R. 810 could mean the difference between a normal life and one of pain and suffering. In millions of other cases, it could mean the difference between life and death. And by authorizing federal funding only for research on embryonic stem cells that will never become human life and that are donated willingly, it achieves its objectives without destroying the potential for life.

To be sure, support from private funds for this research has been welcome. But it is not enough. I have heard from scores of scientists in my home state of Colorado – working in university labs as we speak, trying to find cures for our most devastating

diseases – who tell me that the federal funding H.R. 810 would authorize would boost their capabilities exponentially.

In addition to the practical impact on American laboratories, however, there is something else to consider. I can think of no other nation that should lead this research with strict guidelines than the United States. Throughout our nation's history, America has been the leader in making monumental scientific strides – on everything from cars to computers to medicine – that have made life easier and better for people in our country and all over the world. In a field with such great promise, I believe we owe it to our history and to our position in the world community to once again be the leader.

Mr. President, I want to be clear that I also believe we should promote research on adult umbilical cord stem cells, as well as alternative methods of creating embryonic stem cells. In addition, we should do everything in our power to prevent unethical and repulsive practices from pervading this kind of research. For that reason, I strongly support the other two proposals that are currently before the Senate, S. 2754 and S. 3504.

As I make these remarks today, I think once again of my father. I also think of other fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters across this great nation who live every day with debilitating conditions that stem cell research could help cure. Suffering that could be stopped. Lives that could be saved. Families that could stay together.

We have an opportunity to make great strides on these fronts today, and to do so responsibly. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 810.

I yield the floor.