



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2005

Contact: Brian Schubert

(202) 225-4476

Johnson Leads Stem Cell Research Forward

House Passes Bipartisan Bill to Federally Fund Promising Research

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Nancy Johnson said millions of American families affected by debilitating diseases have new hope today after the U.S. House passed legislation to support potentially life-saving stem cell research.

Johnson is a long-time advocate of expanding federal support and funding for stem cell research. In March, Johnson and four House colleagues brokered a deal with House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL) to secure today's vote on *The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act*, which passed by a bipartisan margin of 238-194. The bill now goes to the U.S. Senate.

“Stem cell research holds tremendous promise to develop cures for the most deadly and debilitating diseases,” Johnson said. “I believe Congress has a responsibility to advance research that saves lives, relieves pain, and prevents suffering. Today’s victory gives new hope to American families affected by illnesses like diabetes and Alzheimer’s for new breakthroughs and treatments.”

Stem cells are basic building blocks for larger cells and tissues. Because stem cells have the unique ability to develop into virtually any cell in the body, many scientists firmly believe that this research has the potential to one day cure cancer, spinal cord injuries, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, and heart disease – illnesses that affect millions of Americans.

The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005 authorizes the National Institutes of Health to fund research on stem cells derived from embryos created for fertility treatment that are unneeded and would otherwise be discarded. Individuals donating these embryos for research purposes must provide informed, written consent and cannot receive compensation. While stem cells can be created using a variety of tissues, the scientific community believes embryonic stem cells hold the greatest promise for breakthroughs, discoveries and cures.

The bill overturns the Administration's current policy limiting federally funded research to embryonic stem cells created prior to August 2001. Since then, scientists have said most of those stem cell lines are contaminated and unsuited for research, meaning that more stem cell lines need to be created for this promising research to go forward.