

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

“The embryonic stem cell debate is over.”

(Charles Krauthammer; Friday, November 30, 2007; The Washington Post)

Co-Sponsor the Patients First Act – A Bi-Partisan Approach to Promoting Ethical Stem Cell Research with Near-Term Clinical Benefits

December 7, 2007

Dear Colleague,

For several years, America has struggled with an impossible choice: Do we ignore the deep moral concern that many of us feel about destroying human embryos—which many believe constitutes ending human life—for the chance to relieve the suffering of countless patients?

The rhetoric in this debate has been heated and divisive. Many of us in Congress felt we had to choose sides—either stand up for the lives of unborn children, or for the lives of those suffering from debilitating diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer and diabetes.

But after recent news of a tremendous scientific breakthrough, it is clear that we no longer have to choose between one life and another.

Researchers James A. Thomson and Shinya Yamanaka announced on November 20, 2007 that they have discovered a way to turn human skin cells into stem cells that behave just like embryonic stem cells—without using embryos or women's eggs. **These embryo-like stem cells are capable of forming into virtually every kind of cell or tissue without the need to destroy human embryos.**

In light of this exciting breakthrough, I write today to invite you to co-sponsor and support the Patients First Act, H.R. 2807. This bill gives all of us the opportunity to unite around our common goal on both sides of the debate—curing and treating patients.

The purpose of H.R. 2807 is to:

- Intensify stem cell research that may result in an improved understanding of, or treatments for, diseases and other adverse health conditions;
- Promote research and human clinical trials using stem cells that are ethically obtained and show evidence of providing clinical benefit for human patients; and
- Promote the creation of pluripotent stem cell lines without the creation of human embryos, or the destruction or discarding of, or risk of injury to, human embryos.

I encourage you to co-sponsor the Patients First Act and join with us in our efforts to support productive and ethical stem cell research by prioritizing scientific research that has the greatest potential for treating patients. If you have any questions or would like to cosponsor the legislation, please contact Carolyn Wise at carolyn.wise@mail.house.gov or 5-6365.

Yours truly,


J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress