



Cloning/Stem Cell Research

- ❑ Prevent either a ban or a moratorium on cloning for research purposes, also known as somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT).

Background

Last summer, without much notice, the House of Representatives held a vote on a bill to ban all human cloning. The bill passed the House with a solid majority.

Two main legislative proposals have been under consideration in the Senate for the past several months. One is a proposal backed by Senators Sam Brownback (R-KS), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), and others, which would criminalize all forms of cloning using human cells. Another is a proposal sponsored by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Arlen Specter (R-PA), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and others, which would ban human reproductive cloning (cloning to create a person) but allow cloning technology to create stem cells for research purposes which may eventually lead to therapies for and cures of diseases. This technology, somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT), is often referred to as therapeutic cloning or cloning for medical research.

The university and research communities are supportive of the Feinstein-Hatch approach. Within the past year, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the Association of American Universities (AAU), and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) have been among the scientific, research, and medical organizations which have issued statements opposing human reproductive cloning but supporting non-reproductive, ethically conducted, bona fide research using SCNT technology. The current law in California, which UC supports, is similar to the Feinstein-Hatch approach. In mid-May President Atkinson sent a letter of support to Senator Feinstein and the other original cosponsors of her proposal thanking them for their legislation (copy attached).

UC plays an active role in the pro-research advocacy efforts on this issue. In addition to President Atkinson's letter, UC leaders and researchers have authored op-eds, letters to the editor, and other public commentary supporting therapeutic cloning. UC has mobilized researchers on our campuses to 1) contact California's Senators Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and thank them for their pro-research position on the cloning issue; 2) write to the senators from other states who had not yet decided how to vote on the issue and urge them to oppose Brownback and support SCNT and therapeutic cloning; and 3) reach out to their university and research colleagues who reside in the states the undecided senators represent and ask them to contact their senators on the matter. UC also works closely with others from the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research (CAMR), the pro-stem cell and pro-therapeutic cloning research coalition of which UC is a member, on legislative strategy including meeting with key Senators and Senate staff, providing them information, letters of support, and feedback as requested.

Status of Relevant Legislation

Negotiations on how cloning legislation would be debated on the Senate floor fell apart in mid-June, leaving the fate of a Senate vote on the matter uncertain for the remainder of this legislative session. Senate Majority Leader Tom

Daschle (D-SD) offered Senator Brownback (R-KS) a deal including a Senate vote on both the Brownback bill and the Feinstein-Hatch bill. Brownback rejected the Daschle plan, deeming it unfavorable for passage of his bill. Daschle, however, now believes he has fulfilled his promise to bring cloning legislation to the Senate floor and he believes he no longer has an obligation to do so.

Brownback's response has been to break down his bill and offer separate anti-cloning provisions as amendments to unrelated legislation the Senate is considering. That strategy has proven unsuccessful thus far. Brownback has also discussed proposing a moratorium on all human cloning in place of a ban, believing a moratorium would garner more support from his Senate colleagues. In addition to Brownback's perseverance, Feinstein is eager to have the Senate vote on her bill to allow therapeutic cloning. Senate leadership has made clear that the Feinstein-Hatch bill will not come to the floor for a vote unless it has a strong chance of passage. In response, Feinstein has been working to secure commitments from a "super-majority" of her colleagues. A super-majority would require 60 or more votes and would ensure that opponents could not filibuster the bill and therefore effectively kill it.

Advocacy Message

Oppose the Brownback cloning legislation and any related amendments he may offer to other bills being considered on the Senate floor.

Support the Feinstein-Hatch approach to allow cloning for medical research, which could lead to life-saving therapies, to continue.