

SOUTHEAST LAW INSTITUTE™

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August 2001

Dear SLI Supporter:

We have been busy this summer with our usual parental rights and education issues. Other unique and potentially important issues involving gambling, church rights, and human life have also been at the forefront. As we move through the summer doldrums and many are taking vacations, the need for vigilance has not diminished - - all of which makes us especially thankful for your continuing support at this time.

Next month we will be telling you about several important lawsuits which are going on right now. We need to be involved in them. We will need your help to do it. However, the most important issue, which must be addressed while we have the opportunity, is that of fetal stem cell research. Hopefully, this newsletter will reach you in time for you to act.

The debate over fetal stem cell research has not intensified and we are hearing about it daily in the news media. "And just why is the stem cell research debate so significant?" one might ask. The answer is easy. It is a debate over the value of human life. That is not only the easy answer . . . it is the ONLY answer. Proponents of stem cell research ignore or minimize the right-to-life issue. They focus only on the need for medical advances to help seriously ill and injured people. No doubt, this is a very difficult debate.

When the equities on the two sides of the issues are so close, it takes a strong conviction to uphold the sanctity of life. SLI is committed to just that and we are obligated to maintain that position in the face of difficult choices.

Our educational memo this month explains the sanctity of life position concerning fetal stem cell research. We are not a lobbying organization, but we are asking that you communicate your feelings about stem cell research with the President, your senators, and your representative. We are providing a comprehensive communications list of federal authorities for your use. Please keep it handy for future reference.

We are thankful for the opportunity to provide assistance on this very serious and important issue. On behalf of human life, we are

Sincerely,

A. Eric Johnston

AEJ/dcw

EDUCATIONAL MEMO FROM THE SOUTHEAST LAW INSTITUTE

To: Southeast Law Institute Supporters

From: A. Eric Johnston

Date: August 2001

Re: Fetal Stem Cell Research versus the Sanctity of Life

The title of this month's educational memo states the debate which is currently taking place. It is best to frame the debate in hard clear terms. We must begin by stating the pro-life community is unanimously opposed to fetal stem cell research. The issue is whether the federal government should fund this research. There are no laws criminalizing or prohibiting this research. Therefore, the debate does not reach the ultimate ethical question of whether it should be permitted at all. However, the ultimate answer for either must be the same.

In order to clarify the debate, the terms must be clearly addressed. Our title refers to “fetal” stem cell research. The media title is “embryonic” stem cell research. Most pro-lifers refer to a “fetus” as an “unborn child”. However, the terms “fetal” and “fetus” are valid medical terms. Similarly, the term “embryo” or “embryonic” have medical meaning. But as often happens in debates in the sanctity of life, those who seemingly wish to diminish the sanctity choose terms which are less descriptive or less offensive to their position. To refer to the vehicle for stem cells as a “embryo” seems to give less recognition to its existence as a human life than “fetal”. If we can clear this first hurdle and recognize that whatever it may be called, embryo, fetus, or unborn child, it has the DNA of the human being and would never be anything but a human being.

As a member of the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition, Inc., SLI has joined in a letter to President George W. Bush, our two Alabama senators, and our seven representatives. That letter describes the essence of the pro-life position on this stem cell research. It listed the following important, though not definitive, list of considerations:

- Regardless of every other argument, the “embryo” upon which research will be done and stem cells removed is a human life.
- A life cannot be traded for another life regardless of the standing or quality of one of those lives.
- We always have promises of continuing medical research. We cannot compromise fundamental human rights and beliefs in the name of advancing medical science, regardless of the potential.
- The embryos which may be frozen and stored or which may be cloned are not going to be “destroyed anyway”. While some may be destroyed, the issue is not using excess or unwanted humans for research, rather can we develop strong ethical guidelines to avoid useless and purposeful waste of human life?
- By assuming unwanted embryos have no value and will be destroyed anyway, we will be led to the commercialization of embryos resulting in cultivation and harvesting of stem cells from human beings who will, like the unborn child in the abortion issue, have nothing but utilitarian value.
- Abortion is a related factor in the equation. Aborted children can become a secondary source of income for abortionists such as baby body parts and the partial-birth abortion business.
- The issue is the “value” of human life and not the “status” or “quality” of human life. As in the abortion issue, unborn children, whether termed fetuses or embryos, are relegated to less than human life (medically and ethically) or personhood (legally and ethically).
- Proponents of this research speak of it without reference to consequences. Specifically, medical advancements through research lead to successive steps. These steps lead to successive ethical dilemmas. These ethical dilemmas lead to a diminution of ethical standards. In practical terms this means if we accept use of stem cells from embryos, will it become acceptable to harvest stem cells from comatose and other neurologically and mentally compromised individuals whose “quality” of life reaches a threshold of meaninglessness?

- This is not a public opinion poll issue. It can only be decided on the basis of pure traditional accepted medical/legal/ethical truths.

SLI is aware of other considerations, as we are sure you are. We each may have varying degrees of understanding or concern for some of these facts. President Bush must decide whether federal funds will be used for fetal stem cell research. Communications from persons all over the country and their elected officials in Congress are important to help President Bush to understand what will be the correct decision:

NO FEDERAL FUNDING FOR RESEARCH ON EMBRYOS, INCLUDING THE CLONING OF EMBRYOS FOR STEM CELL RESEARCH, GENETIC ALTERATION, OR OTHER RESEARCH OF ANY DESCRIPTION.

Additionally, something more is necessary. This is a nationwide problem which begs attention from Congress. Therefore, it is appropriate to communicate with your senators and representative a request to inform President Bush of these factors and to prohibit federal funding and also it is within their unique responsibility to pass laws:

FEDERAL LAWS MUST BE ENACTED PROHIBITING AND CRIMINALIZING ANY SUCH RESEARCH, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE.

At the end of this memo are the various numbers and addresses that you will need for the President, Senators and Representatives. Keep this list for future reference. However, use it immediately to express your position on this issue. ***TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.*** We do not know of a time schedule for President Bush's action and, therefore, we must assume it is imminent. If you have questions or desire further explanation on this issue, please feel free to communicate with SLI.

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