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May 10, 2004

Nancy Reagan Endorses Stem Cell Research

Dear Colleague,

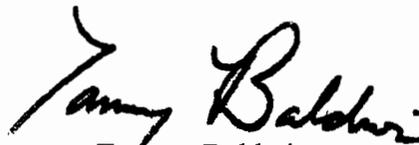
I would like to draw your attention to today's attached *Washington Post* article, "Nancy Reagan Calls for Stem Cell Research."

Stem cell research provides the opportunity to study the growth and differentiation of individual cells. Understanding these processes could provide insights into the causes of birth defects, genetic abnormalities, and a multitude of diseases, including Alzheimer's disease, juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and ALS. If normal development were better understood, it might be possible to prevent or correct some of these conditions. There is no doubt among scientists that this research holds amazing potential.

In her comments Saturday night, former First Lady Mrs. Reagan stressed the hope that stem cell research holds for families of those who suffer from a variety of diseases, including Alzheimer's disease which afflicts her husband, former President Reagan.

I applaud Mrs. Reagan for her support of this promising research and hope that you will take time to consider her comments.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

Nancy Reagan Calls For Stem Cell Research

Former First Lady Makes Plea in Speech

From News Services

Monday, May 10, 2004; Page A02

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. -- Former first lady Nancy Reagan endorsed stem cell research Saturday night and made an impassioned call for taking the controversial procedure out of the political arena, saying it could help cure illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease, which afflicts her husband.

Such research is generally opposed by political conservatives and many antiabortion groups because it involves the destruction of days-old human embryos. President Bush signed an executive order in 2001 limiting research to existing embryonic stem cell lines.

But Reagan and others believe the use of stem cells taken from embryos could lead to cures for such illnesses as Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's, which afflicts Reagan's husband, former president Ronald Reagan.

"Ronnie's long journey has finally taken him to a distant place where I can no longer reach him," she said at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation dinner. "Because of this, I'm determined to do whatever I can to save other families from this pain. I just don't see how we can turn our backs on this."

Nancy Reagan became one of the first conservative public figures to support human embryo research when she first spoke in favor of it more than three years ago.

Letters from former presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton supporting her efforts on embryonic stem cell research were read to the dinner by actors Harrison Ford and Calista Flockhart. Absent was any comment from the Bush administration, which has placed severe restrictions on stem cell research because it can involve using cells from human embryos.

Organizers of the event, which was expected to raise \$2 million, said it was the first time that Reagan had made a public speech on the issue although her views have long been known.

She added after accepting the group's caregiver award: "Science has presented us with a hope called stem cell research, which may provide our scientists with many answers that for so long have been beyond our grasp. . . . We have lost so much time already. I just really can't bear to lose any more."

Actor Michael J. Fox, who has Parkinson's disease and is a supporter of stem cell research, said Reagan was taking the issue out of politics.

"For someone like Mrs. Reagan to step outside of political or ideological groupings and just speak to what she believes . . . can help people is tremendously valuable," he said.

A growing number of state and private efforts designed to skirt federal restrictions are underway, most notably in California, where a measure is expected to qualify for the November ballot. The measure would provide the state's scientists and biotechnology industry with \$3 billion in stem cell research funds. The California measure is being led and supported by wealthy celebrities.