

## President Bush Should Not Have Vetoed Stem Cell Research Funding

*Joseph J. Seneca*

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*President George W. Bush's veto in 2006 of a bill that would have led to more federal funding for stem cell research was a major setback. In spite of this, states can minimize the impact the lack of funding, scientific support, and ethical oversight has had on research. Some states have already made progress with funds made available at the state level. Others, like New Jersey, have provided funding for stem cell research but spending was stalled in disputes as they attempted to launch new programs and build new facilities. New Jersey needs to take immediate steps to move forward, and other states looking to fund stem cell research in lieu of federal funding programs must also be careful to avoid such pitfalls.*

**I**t is incomprehensible that in the 21st century, the government of the United States is overtly restricting the advancement of a science that holds such promise to alleviate human pain and suffering. President [George W.] Bush's recent [2006]

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*Should the Government Fund Embryonic Stem Cell Research?*

veto, the very first of his presidency, of legislation to increase federal funding for new lines of embryonic stem cell research is a major disappointment.

It is also a major inconsistency, since federal funding for such research continues to be provided for an original group of cell lines created before August 2001. What this country has just lost is the opportunity to provide substantial federal funding for research on additional embryonic stem cell lines that have greater possibilities than the original lines to yield effective therapies for a wide range of devastating human diseases and injuries.

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*One danger posed by the lack of enhanced federal support is that the stem cell initiatives in various states may fall victim to cyclical state budget constraints.*

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### **Stem Cell Research Continues Despite Veto**

Stem cell research will still go forward in the United States, but it will do so, for now, without the supportive environment, coordinated scientific peer review process and ethical oversight of the National Institutes of Health. A number of states, along with private sources of funding, will continue to fill the vacuum created by this oxymoron [inherent contradiction] of a faith-based federal science policy. It is inevitable that, in time, the federal government will change this restriction. The tragedy is the lost opportunities and continued deep suffering of the victims and their families, absent the hope that such additional, federally supported, research would provide.

New Jersey has been a leader in all forms of stem cell research. It was the first state, under [former] Gov. Richard J. Codey, to provide research funds through a careful and impeccable ethical and scientific review process overseen by the New Jersey Commission on Science and Technology.