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July 8, 2013

RE: H.R. 2433, DeGette-Dent clone-and-kill bill

Dear Member of Congress:

The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) strongly opposes H.R. 2433, introduced on June 19 by Reps. Diana DeGette and Charles Dent. This bill authorizes federal funding of research that kills human embryos, and federal funding for human cloning and human embryo farms. We urge you not to cosponsor H.R. 2433 or to lend your support in any way to this legislation.

Proposed Section 498E would codify the use of federal funds for virtually any research that “utilizes human stem cells.” This authorization includes – but is not limited to – “human embryonic stem cells.” If “human embryonic stem cells” are utilized, then funding is constrained by the provisions of Section 498E(b), specifying that the embryos must be created by in vitro fertilization and donated subject to certain conditions – but there are no constraints whatever on the funding of any other research involving “human stem cells.”

This is important, because the bill language is carefully constructed to avoid recognizing that the product of cloning (somatic cell nuclear transfer, or SCNT), utilizing human genetic material, is a cloned human embryo. This evasion is apparently engaged in precisely to allow federal funds to be used to create human embryos by cloning, for the sole purpose of using them directly as research subjects, and/or harvesting their stem cells and allowing those stem cells to be used in federally funded research. It is noteworthy that the current director of the NIH, Dr. Francis Collins, has been among those who dispute the application of the label “embryo” to entities produced through somatic cell nuclear transfer using human genetic material. (“It would only become a cloned person if you then intentionally decided to take those cells and reimplant them in the uterus of a recipient woman. . . . But until you get to that point, it’s not clear to me that you’re dealing with something that deserves to be called an embryo or deserves to be given moral status.” [“The Believer,” Salon.com, August 7, 2006].) If this mind set is applied to the language of H.R. 2433, then the use of both cloned human embryos and their harvested stem cells in federally funded research would be permissible under the bill.

This analysis is reinforced by examination of the proposed Section 498G. The section heading reads, “Prohibition Against Funding for Human Cloning,” but this is an Orwellian exercise, as the bill actually authorizes what the section heading claims to prohibit. Under the proposed definition of “human cloning,” it would be perfectly permissible to use federal funds to create

any number of cloned human embryos, and to do whatever the researcher desires with them, including killing them to harvest their stem cells. The only prohibition is on the use of federal funds to implant “the product of transferring the nuclear material of a human somatic cell into an egg cell from which the nuclear material has been removed or rendered inert” – take note of the elaborate effort to avoid defining this human entity as a human embryo – “into a uterus or the functional equivalent of a uterus.”

In short, H.R. 2433 is just another deceptively packaged “clone and kill” bill, very similar in substance to other “clone and kill” bills that repeatedly have been presented to the full House, and rejected every time – most recently on June 6, 2007 (roll call 439), when a similar deceptively labeled bill by Rep. DeGette failed to garner even a simple majority when an attempt was made to pass it under Suspension of the Rules.

On top of all that, in proposed Section 498F the bill grants a virtual ethical blank check to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health to develop and update guidelines applicable to human stem cell research “as scientifically warranted.”

In summary: H.R. 2433 would codify a federal policy under which federal taxpayer dollars could fund the mass creation of human embryos, using the SCNT-cloning process, so that they can be used in research that will kill them. The National Right to Life Committee urges you to reject H.R. 2433 and any other proposal to put the federal government in the business of funding human cloning and human embryo farms.

Sincerely,



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