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“We passed a law saying no cloning and I think that's the law that we ought to follow.”

– Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt, just 19 days after the House passed the Weldon-Stupak bill to ban all human cloning

February 24, 2003

Dear Colleague,

On Thursday, February 27, the House will take up the Weldon-Stupak Human Cloning Prohibition Act (H.R. 534), a bill to prohibit the creation of human embryos by cloning.

This is the same bill that the House debated on July 31, 2001. On that occasion, our colleague Mr. Greenwood offered a substitute amendment that would have permitted the human cloning (the cloning of human embryos), but attempted to prohibit initiating a pregnancy by implanting such a cloned human embryo in a womb. The House decisively rejected the Greenwood Substitute, and then adopted the Weldon-Stupak bill overwhelmingly, 265-162. Although 64 members of the Democratic caucus voted to pass the Weldon-Stupak bill, to our disappointment, Democratic Leader Gephardt voted in opposition.

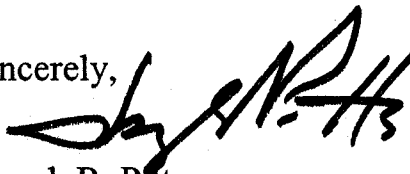
However, it is noteworthy that when Mr. Gephardt appeared on NBC's *Meet the Press* less than three weeks later, on August 19, 2001, he appeared to have had a change of heart. Although host Tim Russert did not ask about cloning, Mr. Gephardt volunteered this remarkable statement:

“Obviously, we don't want cloning We passed a law saying no cloning and I think that's the law that we ought to follow.”

The only bill that had been passed pertaining to cloning, of course, was the Weldon-Stupak bill (the House had emphatically rejected the pro-cloning Greenwood Substitute). It seemed that Mr. Gephardt was taking credit for what the House had done, even though he had voted against it just three weeks earlier. But be that as it may, we certainly agree with Mr. Gephardt's conclusion that the ban that the House passed (the Weldon-Stupak bill) is indeed "the law that we ought to follow."

We urge you to oppose the Greenwood Substitute, which would permit what President Bush called cloned human "embryo farms," and to support the Weldon-Stupak bill, the only bill that would really say "no cloning."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe R. Pitts", written in a cursive style.

Joseph R. Pitts

Member of Congress

PS. The complete transcript of the exchange between Mr. Russert and Mr. Gephardt is reproduced on the back of this letter.

**Excerpt from NBC MEET THE PRESS
Sunday, August 19, 2001**

MR. TIM RUSSERT: Let me turn to the issue of stem cell embryo research. The president decided that we should look at the stem cells that already exist, but not allow any development of any new stem cells. You disagree with him. Why?

REP. RICHARD GEPHARDT (D-Mo.): I just -- I don't think we know where this research is going. We don't even know how many stem cell segments are out there now. He said 60. Some of the researchers don't even know that there are 60 in place now. This is an emerging field. Look, if you have somebody in your family who has Alzheimer's, who has diabetes, who has cancer, you want to find the answers to these problems. The researchers believe there may be real answers to many of these diseases over the next years. We shouldn't limit the areas that we're going to look at. We ought to see where the research can go. Obviously, we don't want cloning. Nobody is for cloning. But we need to use the research that's out there to get the answers to these diseases. Boy, if you've got somebody in your family that's really ill, you want to know the research might find an answer.

MR. RUSSERT: The public seems to support the president overwhelmingly. Let me show you the latest USA Today poll. Sixty percent approve of the president's decision; just 34 percent disagree. And there's a simple question to be asked: When do you think life begins?

REP. GEPHARDT: Well, the Supreme Court said, after the -- you know, somewhere between the first and second trimester.

MR. RUSSERT: But when do you think?

REP. GEPHARDT: I think the Supreme Court probably had it right. And I think we ought to use the research that can be done on stem cells to find the answers to these dread diseases. You know, try...

MR. RUSSERT: Wait, wait, wait. This is important. When you first came to Congress, you proposed a constitutional amendment to ban all abortion. And you said on the House floor, "Life begins at conception." You've now changed your mind?

REP. GEPHARDT: I think that the thing to do here is to follow the Supreme Court. I think their decision said it very clearly, and I think that's the policy that ought to be followed. I think on this stem cell research decision, we've got to let the research go to where it can, to find the answers to these problems.

MR. RUSSERT: Including using the frozen embryos that are created by in vitro fertilization clinics.

REP. GEPHARDT: I think we ought to let the research find the answers to these problems.

MR. RUSSERT: So you would use those?

REP. GEPHARDT: We passed a law saying no cloning and I think that's the law that we ought to follow.

MR. RUSSERT: But these are stem cell embryos created by in vitro fertilization clinics that are discarded if not used for research.

REP. GEPHARDT: I think we ought to let the research find the answers to these problems.