

July 21, 2006 PRESS RELEASE

STEM CELL RESEARCH AND POLITICAL HYPOCRISY

“On May 24, 2005, my opponent, the six-term Republican Phil English, voted against amending the Public Health Service Act to provide for human embryonic stem cell research,” said Dr. Steven Porter, the Democratic candidate for Congress in the 3rd district of Pennsylvania, in a press release dated today. “Yesterday, in spite of the fact that both houses of Congress eventually passed the bill, President Bush vetoed it—the only bill he has vetoed in six years.

“Since it does not appear that there will be a two-thirds vote to override Bush’s veto, the bill will die—and so will millions of Americans and many more than that around the world. I am willing to concede that the positions of both Bush and English were taken on grounds that they claim to be moral ones, but I cannot be silent about the colossal hypocrisy of their positions in view of their prosecution and support of the unnecessary killing in Iraq and the illegal torture of prisoners in U.S. custody.

“I would like to present a few facts about embryonic stem cells and the research involved with them before I comment further about the hypocrisy of Bush and English. I feel that these facts have great bearing on my opposition to the Bush-English agenda.

“Let’s start by saying that embryonic stem cells present far more promising lines of research than either adult stem cells (which are difficult to extract and small in number) or existing stem cell lines (which are gradually degrading and will soon be useless for research). Embryonic stem cells are generally obtained from surplus donations for in-vitro fertilization. Couples usually donate around 16 or so embryos, and when fertilization occurs, the unused donations can be dealt with in one of four ways: they can be discarded, they can be donated to another infertile couple, they can be used for research, or they can be preserved in a frozen state.

“There are very few couples who donate their surplus embryos to other couples—generally for emotional reasons. Thawed embryos have a very low chance of yielding a pregnancy. So the two ways of dealing with surplus embryos most often chosen are discarding and research. Finally, the embryos in question are in every medical sense unfeeling and incapable of independent life.

“There are,” Porter went on, “over 100 million Americans and over 2 billion people worldwide who might benefit from embryonic research. Paralysis, certain cancers, diabetes, and a host of other illnesses could be treated—even cured—by this research which some scientists have called the most significant advance in medicine since the discovery of antibiotics.

“All of which leaves us with the Bush-English refusal to allow the research, even though it will go on privately and is now being undertaken in many nations (like Australia and France) where the religious views of the government are not being used to thwart it.

“What annoys me about the Bush-English agenda (besides the fact that it panders to their base on the far right) is the fact that both men have voted consistently to kill not undeveloped cells but fully-formed human beings in a war based on lies. Over 2,500 of our troops and tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians have been killed with tens of thousands more horribly injured by the policies of Bush and English with nary a religious peep. And the use of depleted uranium in American weaponry which has created a rash of cancer in both our soldiers and the Iraqi people has been countenanced by Bush and English without any moral dilemma whatsoever.

“The juxtaposition of stem cell research to end human suffering and the prosecution of an illegal and unnecessary war that has promoted an ocean of human suffering and helped to create a cesspool of violence across the Middle East and around the globe is unbelievable to me from a moral standpoint. How men can vociferously defend the rights of a collection of undeveloped cells at the same time they enact the policies that lead to the death and injury of thousands of real people simply beggars the imagination.

“For me, the hypocrisy of both Bush and English is one of the most destructive forces in my lifetime, and I pray every day that the people of my district and my nation will see it for what it is and vote it out of office.”

All of Dr. Porter’s views on the issues are attached to this release so that the media can disseminate them to the public.