

# California Votes “Yes” for Stem Cell Research

Californians went to the polls on November 2, 2004 to cast their votes not only for president, state and local political leaders but also for 16 statewide propositions ranging from the election rights of political parties to funding children’s hospital projects. However, one of the most publicized and controversial propositions on California’s ballot this year was Proposition 71: Funding for Stem Cell Research.

Proposition 71, which recently passed in the elections with 59% of the votes, financially supports research of stem cells that are taken from adults, cord blood, and embryos. It will ultimately provide \$3 billion over the next 10 years for stem cell research in California. The California Stem Cell Research & Cures Initiative describes stem cells as, “...‘unspecialized’ cells that can generate healthy new cells and tissues. As a result they have the potential to provide lifesaving cures for many different diseases and injuries including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer’s, multiple sclerosis, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson’s, ALS, osteoporosis and spinal cord injuries.” The \$295 million per year funding for Proposition 71 will be taken from state tax-exempt bonds, and the stem cell research will take place at leading universities and research institutions within California.

In an interview with ABC on June 10, 2004, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) went against his political party’s stand on stem cell research and said, “I support stem cell research. I think it is very, very important that the whole nation pulls together on a federal and a state level.”

With high profile supporters such as Brad Pitt, Michael J. Fox, Nancy Reagan and many more, Proposition 71 was in the spotlight long before it was passed by the voters in California. Many are hopeful that the results of Proposition 71 will prove to be beneficial in curing life threatening diseases.

It’s no secret that stem cell research has been widely debated across the United States from the country’s top political leaders to families reaching out for a cure for diseases affecting their loved ones.

Because of the moral issues surrounding stem cell research, many people are opposed to the idea of providing national or state funding. This is especially true when the issue of embryonic stem cell research is confronted. Embryonic stem cells are said to have the greatest potential to provide cures for incurable diseases, but many people are morally against producing embryos purely for their use in stem cell research. As this topic faces much debate in Congress, it will most likely be difficult to achieve national funding for stem cell research in the upcoming years. President Bush and other highly influential political leaders have publicly campaigned against stem cell research in the past, and they appear to have no plans of supporting it in the future unless the process becomes more ethically desirable.

Because of the conflicting viewpoints across the country, states such as California and New Jersey have passed motions to fund stem cell research from within the state. They are hopeful to get a head start on the research as the nation decides what position it should take to either support or oppose stem cell research.

