



NEWS

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DATE: August 25, 2010

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BISHOPS WELCOME RULING AGAINST EMBRYONIC STEM CELL FUNDING, URGE GOVERNMENT TO PURSUE ETHICAL STEM CELL RESEARCH

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, welcomed the federal court injunction against the Obama administration’s funding of human embryonic stem cell research, calling the ruling a “victory for common sense and sound medical ethics.” He said this ruling also vindicates the bishops’ reading of the Dickey amendment, the amendment approved by Congress since 1996, which prevents federal funding of research in which human embryos are harmed or destroyed.

“I hope this court decision will encourage our government to renew and expand its commitment to ethically sound avenues of stem cell research,” Cardinal DiNardo added. “These avenues are showing far more promise than destructive human embryo research in serving the needs of suffering patients.”

The full statement follows:

The preliminary injunction against the Obama administration’s funding of human embryonic stem cell research is a welcome victory for common sense and sound medical ethics. It also vindicates a reading of Congress’s statutory language on embryo research that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has defended for more than a decade.

Each year since 1996, Congress has approved the Dickey amendment to forbid funding any “research in which” human embryos are harmed or destroyed. This should ensure that taxpayers are not forced to fund a research project when pursuing that project requires the destruction of human life at its earliest stage. However, beginning with a legal memo commissioned by the

Clinton administration in January 1999, this law has been distorted and narrowed to allow federal funding of research that directly relies on such destruction. As the bishops' conference said in congressional testimony in 1999, "a mere bookkeeping distinction between funds used to destroy the embryo and funds used to work with the resultant cells is not sufficient" to comply with the law. In the health care reform debate, as well, we have pointed out that an executive order by itself cannot change the meaning of a law passed by Congress, and that the longstanding policy against funding health plans that cover abortion is not satisfied, but circumvented, by a bookkeeping distinction that merely segregates accounts within such plans.

A task of good government is to use its funding power to direct resources where they will best serve and respect human life, not to find new ways to evade this responsibility. I hope this court decision will encourage our government to renew and expand its commitment to ethically sound avenues of stem cell research. These avenues are showing far more promise than destructive human embryo research in serving the needs of suffering patients.

Keywords: embryonic stem cell research, Dickey amendment, Obama administration, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Committee on Pro-Life Activities, USCCB, U.S. bishops, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, federal court, ruling, injunction, federal funding, destruction of human embryos, ethical research

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