

Proposal 2

Unregulated Embryo Destruction

Questions and Answers

Q. What is Proposal 2?

A. Proposal 2 is a constitutional amendment that will appear on the November 4th general election ballot. This proposal seeks to expand embryonic stem cell research in Michigan to allow for the destruction of human embryos, without legislative oversight or accountability. Proposal 2 also fails to strengthen the state's ban on human cloning, which is an integral component of human embryo research. The proposal does nothing to advance ethical adult stem cell research, and it prohibits the state or local authorities from regulating the destruction of human embryos in Michigan.

Q. What is the Church's response to Proposal 2?

A. The Roman Catholic Bishops of Michigan urge all Catholics and people of good will to vote NO on Proposal 2. The Catholic Church teaches that any effort to deliberately and intentionally destroy human life, including the destruction of human embryos, represents evil and is never acceptable.

Q. How did Proposal 2 make the ballot?

A: For the past several years advocates of embryonic stem cell research have attempted to overturn a state law that prevents human embryos from being destroyed. Those efforts have failed because both Democrats and Republicans have opposed the legislation. Earlier this year an individual paid an out-of-state professional firm some \$2 million to collect signatures to place the issue on the November ballot. Enough signatures were collected, and the Board of State Canvassers certified the measure as Proposal 2. The supporters of Proposal 2 have stated they will spend over \$20 million on this campaign.

Q: Aren't the embryos just going to be thrown out anyway? Why not use them for research?

A: This argument is simply invalid. For it to be consistent, society would then have to deem as disposable the terminally ill and condemned prisoners. "Using" the human embryos does not accurately describe human embryonic stem cell research. The reality is that the researcher willingly destroys the living human embryo in order to extract the embryo's stem cells. Besides, the fact that an embryonic human being is at risk of being abandoned by his or her parents does not give the government the right to destroy that infant human life. The argument also fails to consider the long-term consequences of human embryo research. When the very limited number of human embryos have been destroyed, from where will the additional embryos come? The answer, as witnessed in both California and England, is egg extraction, a process that is extremely painful for women and opens the door for the exploitation of minorities, the poor and the most vulnerable. Embryo destructive research is neither pro-life nor consistent with the Church's teaching on social justice.

Q. Who supports Proposal 2?

A: The proposed constitutional amendment is supported by some elected officials, the University of Michigan and profit-driven corporations. Governor Jennifer Granholm, U.S. Senator Carl Levin, and former Congressman Joe Schwarz are among the leading advocates of this measure.

Q: Who is opposed to Proposal 2?

A: In addition to the Catholic Church, opponents of Proposal 2 include a wide array of individuals from the medical and legal profession, elected officials, and grassroots advocates such as Right to Life of Michigan. Both the Republican Senate Majority Leader and Democratic Speaker of the House, along with several lawmakers from both political parties, are opposed to Proposal 2. All of these individuals and organizations have unified to form MiCAUSE, Michigan Citizens Against Unrestricted Science and Experimentation. MiCAUSE is the official ballot question committee opposed to Proposal 2.

Q: Have any benefits ever come from embryonic stem cell research?

A: No. There has not been one treatment or cure for any debilitating disease since embryonic stem cells were first extracted from living human embryos over a decade ago. The main reason for this lack of success is the fact that when the stem cells are injected into laboratory rats they cause cancer and erratic bone and tumor growth due to tissue rejection. In order to find exact genetic matches, researchers turn to human cloning.

Q: Have any advancements been made in stem cell research?

A: Yes, and they do not necessitate the destruction of human embryos. Last November two separate groups of scientists, one in the United States and the other in Japan, succeeded in reprogramming human skin cells into embryonic-like cells. These “Induced Pluripotent Stem” (iPS) cells were able to differentiate into any other type of human tissue, meaning they perform the same functions as those sought by supporters of embryo research. Many prominent scientists have since abdicated human embryo research in favor of iPS cells, including Dr. James Thomson, the individual who first isolated stem cells from embryos and one of the authors of the iPS studies. Adult stem cell research, which does not necessitate the destruction of human embryos, has resulted in the treatment of over 70 different medical conditions, including lymphoma, leukemia, brain cancer, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, corneal damage and many other medical conditions. Sickle cell anemia is being cured thanks to the advancements made with stem cell research that does no harm to the human embryo.

Q: Have similar ballot proposals been proposed in other states?

A: Public policies promoting embryo destructive research have arisen in several states across the country, including California, New Jersey, New York, Illinois and Missouri. In 2007 voters in New Jersey rejected a ballot proposal that sought to allocate \$450 million in taxpayer funds for embryo research. At the behest of former Governor Elliot Spitzer, the State of New York spent \$600 million to create a fund for embryo destructive research. And in California, voters in 2004 approved \$3 billion, \$300 million for 10 years, in taxpayer funds for embryo research. By preventing lawmakers from regulating embryo research in Michigan, Proposal 2 would be among the most radical human embryo amendments in the country.

Q: What federal and state laws exist related to embryonic stem cell research?

A: There are no federal or state laws that prohibit human embryonic stem cell research. Michigan law prohibits the destruction of human embryos. Federal law prohibits taxpayer funding for human embryo destruction. Researchers are permitted to buy human embryonic stem cells that have been destroyed elsewhere and research them here in Michigan, but they are not allowed to destroy those human embryos within the state. Human embryo research has been ongoing at the University of Michigan Center for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research since 2003, when it received federal funding (taxpayer dollars) from the National Institutes of Health. In fact, the number of individuals working at that facility has more than doubled in the past few years. There are now over 40 individuals performing human embryo research at the University of Michigan.

Q: Where can I find more information online?

A: More information about MiCAUSE and the grassroots campaign that has been assembled to defeat Proposal 2 can be found at www.micause.com. The website includes links to volunteer, to order yard signs or bumper stickers, and to read more about how Proposal 2 goes too far.