

## The State News

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# Stem cell opponents defying voters' will

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Last fall, Michigan voters approved Proposal 2, which lifted harsh and outdated restrictions on stem cell research and provided for strict ethical guidance. This was a major victory for the millions who could benefit from new treatments and cures to some of the worst chronic illnesses, as well as for the medical and related sciences research for communities in our state.



**Ryan Dinkgrave**

The voter referendum almost immediately was followed by announcements of major investments in this research in our state, at a time when diversifying and invigorating our state's battered economy is more important than ever.

Voters also elected President Barack Obama as president of the United States that day. Among Obama's campaign promises was an overturning of President George W. Bush's effective ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. Obama made good on that promise earlier this year, triggering further investments in such research both here in Michigan and across the nation.

Although most of the state celebrated Michigan joining the ranks of other states that have eliminated misguided and outdated legislation on such research from their books, those who opposed the proposal had some time to reflect on their failed campaign.

From the beginning, the effort was at best misleading, and at worst loaded with outright lies and fearmongering, and it appropriately drew both local and national criticism for its tactics. Although nobody tends to flinch when a group such as Right to Life Michigan pays for such dramatic moves, the Michigan Catholic Conference and its related groups had to explain the millions of dollars of their supporters' money they wasted on the effort.

Now some of these same opponents are trying to convince the state Legislature that it should add some new harsh restrictions to the voter-approved measure. Unfortunately, the groups have not learned from their past ways and are again pushing a questionable effort in support of restrictions on what they misleadingly call "embryo research."

Such fringe groups certainly will be shouting loud, because at this time next year, Michigan will be host to the nonprofit Genetic Policy Institute's World Stem Cell Summit. In recognition of the efforts of Michigan citizens to pass Proposal 2, and investments and accomplishments in such research in Michigan, the GPI is bringing the world's leading stem cell researchers, policy experts, philanthropists, advocates and educators together in Detroit.

The Summit will take place in Detroit's Renaissance Center, the headquarters of General Motors, with TechTown, the buzzing business incubator host to several stem cell research-related firms, a few blocks away in the background.

As Detroit, the state of Michigan and much of the Midwest struggle to redefine themselves and their economies, investments in advanced scientific research in pursuit of life-saving cures are helping to turn the tide. In that regard, it would be quite fitting if our sense of innovation and ingenuity that birthed the automobile and reared the middle class would cure chronic diseases and improve lives around the world.

Today, though, we are relatively at the beginning of this journey of reinvention and scientific discovery. Recent political and policy achievements have allowed Michigan a chance to compete in these emerging industries, and these efforts are being rewarded with major investment and international attention, but it will take a commitment of the people in this state to keep up the momentum.

As long as we continue to value the saving of human lives through intelligent and ethical research and do not allow ourselves to be misguided by those who are unclear about their facts and actual agendas, we can see the sciences helping to lead our state into a healthy and prosperous future.

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