

By Ted Agres

NEWS

Stem cell supporters upset by Bush veto

President's decision blocks congressional okay to expand funding; he also signs into law legislation banning 'fetal farming'

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Supporters of expanded Federal funding for human embryonic stem cells (hESC) are voicing their disappointment over President Bush's decision yesterday (July 19) to veto a controversial bill (HR [810](#)) that would have [extended Federal research funding](#) to newly derived hESCs. He also signed into law a less-contentious bill (S [3504](#)) that prohibits trafficking human fetal tissue "gestated for research purposes." Both bills had passed the Senate one day earlier (July 18).

The stem cell expansion bill "would support the taking of innocent human life in the hope of finding medical benefits for others," Bush said in a speech from the White House, surrounded by 18 children "adopted" as surplus embryos created by *in vitro* fertilization. "It crosses a moral boundary that our decent society needs to respect, so I vetoed it," Bush said.

The House of Representatives, where the expansion bill originated, sought to over-ride the President's veto yesterday, but the vote of 235 to 193 fell 51 votes short of the two-thirds needed. While some House members yesterday discussed ways to re-introduce the bill in other forms, the Senate [agreed last month](#) not to consider any further stem cell legislation for the remainder of the session.

While widely expected, Bush's veto -- the first of his presidency -- was met with disappointment and frustration by legislators and biomedical research advocates. "The entire advocacy community will be grappling with what to do now," said Carrie Wolinetz, senior public policy analyst at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). "We haven't given up hope, but we are moving only on sheer optimism at this point," she told *The Scientist*.

Bush's veto "sets us back a year or so until we can finally pass a bill that will have the requisite supermajority to be able to become law, and that sets back embryonic stem cell research another year or so," said Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), one of many Republican senators who supports expanded research funding, at a Senate press gathering.

"It was deplorable that Bush vetoed the bill," said Bernard Siegel, executive director of the [Genetics Policy Institute](#). "There is a broad consensus in the U.S. that this research needs to advance," he said, predicting that a groundswell of public support will turn what

is now a political issue into a consumer one.

"A broad base in society is saying, we want this research and we want the potential that this research will bring," Siegel told *The Scientist*.

It was not clear when the House might resume consideration of a non-controversial [third stem cell bill](#) (S 2754) that did not receive enough House votes to earn an expedited review. The measure, which directs the National Institutes of Health to support alternative ways of deriving hESC without destroying embryos, was unanimously approved by the Senate Tuesday. "This is an important piece of legislation," Bush said. "I'm disappointed that the House failed to authorize funding for this vital and ethical research."

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Links within this article

"Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005" (HR 810)

[thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:h.r.810:](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:h.r.810)

T Agres, "U.S. Senate approves stem cell bills," *The Scientist*, July 19, 2006

www.thescientist.com/news/display/23983/

Fetus Farming Prohibition Act of 2006 (S 3504)

[thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:s.3504:](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:s.3504)

T Agres, "U.S. Senate to OK expanded stem cell bill?" *The Scientist*, July 10, 2006

www.the-scientist.com/news/display/23895/

Genetics Policy Institute

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"Alternative Pluripotent Stem Cell Therapies Enhancement Act" (S 2754)

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