

MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES
DATE: MARCH 14, 2005
RE: MASSACHUSETTS VOTERS' VIEW ON STEM CELL AND SCNT RESEARCH

From March 7 to 9, 2005, Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted a statewide survey among voters in Massachusetts on behalf of the Civil Society Institute. The purpose of the survey was to understand voters' knowledge of and feelings toward embryonic stem cell and somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) research, and to gauge their support for the stem cell research bill currently before the state legislature. Six hundred and six (606) interviews were conducted; the sample is representative of Massachusetts voters. The survey findings carry a margin of error of ± 4.0 percentage points for the full sample; the margin of error is higher among subgroups.

The survey's results clearly show that Massachusetts voters strongly support embryonic stem cell research. Voters express a similarly high level of support for SCNT research and they are extremely enthusiastic about the idea of Massachusetts government promoting both embryonic stem cell and SCNT research. This strong support remains after voters consider arguments both in favor of and against SCNT research.

The key findings from this survey are outlined below.

1) Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly favor embryonic stem cell research and the more they learn about it the deeper their support becomes. Massachusetts voters strongly support embryonic stem cell research, as seven in ten voters say that they strongly (41%) or somewhat (29%) favor this type of research, while 21% say that they oppose it, and 9% are unsure of their position. (By way of comparison, 63% of voters in a national poll commissioned by the Civil Society Institute in February 2005 indicated they favor embryonic stem cell research, while 28% said they oppose it.) Enthusiasm is both deep and broad, as majorities or pluralities of nearly every demographic subgroup express their support for stem cell research., including large majorities of voters under age 65 (73%), Boston-area residents (70%), Protestants (69%), those

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who live outside the Boston area (68%), Catholics (62%), and seniors (60%). Support outweighs opposition even among audiences who are traditionally less enthusiastic about embryonic stem cell research, such as regular churchgoers (50% favor, 37% oppose) and self-identified conservatives (49%, 41%).

Significantly, once respondents hear a description of the embryonic stem cell research process, the proportion who favor this research increases by 11 percentage points to 81%, with only 16% saying that they oppose it. Again, Massachusetts voters are more supportive than are voters nationwide, as 72% of voters said that they favor this research after hearing the same description in the February 2005 Civil Society Institute poll.

2) Voters express the same high level of support for SCNT research as they do for embryonic stem cell research. Initially, only about one in five voters (18%) say that they have heard or read anything about SCNT research. Once they are read a description of the SCNT process, however, fully four in five (79%) voters say that they favor this type of research, including 45% who strongly favor it. Again, this sentiment crosses demographic lines, as substantial majorities of all subgroups favor SCNT research.

Even when SCNT is described as cloning for the purpose of medical research and therapy, voters clearly express their approval for this type of research. By better than two to one, voters approve of cloning that is designed to develop stem cells for medical research into curing diseases but that does *not* result in the birth of a human being—62% approve of such cloning, while 30% disapprove of it. Conversely, Massachusetts voters resoundingly disapprove of cloning designed to result in the birth of another human being; fully 84% of voters say that they disapprove of such cloning, while only 10% approve.

3) Voters strongly endorse legislation that supports stem cell medical research in Massachusetts. Eighty-one percent (81%) of voters say that they favor the bill currently before the Massachusetts legislature that supports and promotes embryonic stem cell and SCNT research in the state, including a 53% majority who strongly favor the bill. This legislation, which Governor Mitt Romney opposes, is favored by large majorities of self-identified Democrats (91%), independents (82%), and Republicans (66%). Additionally, voters approve of

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each of the major components of the legislation:

- Creates an independent advisory panel to address ethical issues (82% favor)
- Allows doctors and medical researchers to create stem cells using SCNT (81% favor)
- Supports stem cell research using frozen embryos from fertility clinics (77% favor)
- Bans and establishes criminal penalties for reproductive cloning (77% favor)

After hearing a number of arguments both in favor of the SCNT legislation and in opposition to it, support for the legislation remains high, with 76% of voters saying that they strongly (46%) or somewhat (30%) favor it, and only 20% saying that they oppose it.