

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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SENATE PASSAGE OF BILL TO PROHIBIT HUMAN CLONING AFFIRMS DIGNITY OF HUMAN LIFE AT ALL STAGES

This week the Wisconsin State Senate approved a number of legislative proposals, which further protections for human life. The Wisconsin Catholic Conference praised the Senate's action, particularly with regard to the passage of the Human Cloning Ban, Assembly Bill 499, authored by Representative Steve Kestell (R-Elkhart Lake) and Senator Joe Leibham (R-Sheboygan).

In affirming the passage of AB 499, WCC Executive Director John Huebscher observed, "The Senate's action clearly establishes that the public has a role, indeed a responsibility, to set boundaries for ethical research. AB 499 draws a line that will not stop the advancement of scientific knowledge and the discovery of cures, but instead points the way toward ethical means of achieving those shared goals.

Huebscher continued, "Wisconsin's progressive tradition has long held that economic development is not incompatible with respect and concern for those who are vulnerable. The Senate's action moves Wisconsin forward, establishing protection of human life at all stages as a preeminent value - a value that will ultimately serve Wisconsin well and stand the test of time."

The Governor stated his intentions to veto the legislation stating that a prohibition on human cloning will prevent Wisconsin scientists from finding cures that save lives. Huebscher argued, "The issue is not whether or not one supports cures, but whether or not one supports unlimited means to arrive at those cures."

"Science and society have always accepted that there are certain boundaries that must be maintained in order to protect human beings from becoming mere scientific subjects. Opposition to human cloning does not mean that one is more opposed to curing cancer or Parkinson's disease anymore than those with moral qualms about the Tuskegee experiments opposed cures to venereal disease. History contains many examples of medical research that we now universally reject as inhumane.

The Senate also approved:

- **Assembly Bill 207**, that creates new legal protections for health care facilities and health care workers who refuse, based on religious or moral precepts, to participate in certain activities. The bill expands the types of health care professionals protected and expands the types of activities that a worker may

refuse. The Governor vetoed similar legislation last session and has signaled his intentions to do so again.

The WCC affirmed the importance of legal protections for acts of conscience noting, “Even as the state seeks to balance individual rights in a way that best secures the freedom of all, the state must protect any person from compulsion to act in ways that contradict his or her religious and moral values,” Huebscher said.

- **Assembly Bill 270**, that requires pregnant women to be informed about the opportunity to donate the umbilical cord blood of their newborn child to a cord blood bank. This bill received bipartisan support and the Governor will likely sign this measure, which enhances the availability of adult stem cells for research and treatment. “Umbilical cord blood is a rich, ethically acceptable resource for adult stem cells. These stem cells are already treating life-threatening diseases. Increasing the number of donors will directly benefit patients today and build a resource of stem cells for ongoing research and discovery into the future.” Huebscher explained.
- **Senate Bill 138**, known as the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act, adds a new requirement to Wisconsin’s informed consent for abortion law. Under the bill physicians would be required to inform a woman that there is evidence that unborn children after 20 weeks gestation have the physical structures necessary to experience pain and that the unborn child will experience substantial pain as a result of the abortion procedure.

The WCC supported this bill, which passed the Senate 21-12. The bill now moves to the Assembly for their consideration.

- **Senate Bill 286**, that would require school districts that offer human growth and development curriculum to provide material that presents abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice of behavior and the most effective means of preventing pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV.

In testimony in support of SB 286 the WCC stated, “By appealing to the inner strength and resolve of children and adolescents, to their inherent dignity and creativity, and to their need for love and responsibility, an intelligent and compassionate abstinence program can become just such an opportunity to form free and mature individuals.”

The bill now goes to the Assembly for further action.

For talking points and additional information on AB 499 see the WCC website at www.wisconsinatholic.org.

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