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Stem Cell Fact Check: Bush Was Not the First to Allow Funding

As Congress begins the debate on stem cell funding, one thing we will hear over and over from the Bush administration is that President Bush was the first to allow funding for stem cell research. In fact, the National Institutes of Health Revitalization Act, passed in 1993 and signed by President Clinton gave the NIH direct authority to fund human embryo research for the first time. And in 2000, the Clinton Administration endorsed ethical guidelines that allowed NIH to begin accepting grant proposals from scientists. The Bush administration put a halt to application review in 2001 and in August 2001, placed restrictions on stem cell research that legislation being debated this week seeks to overturn.

Bush Claim to Be First to Allow Stem Cell Funding Are Wrong

"In one sense, Bush's administration is a turning point. He has presided over the first flow of federal funds to a promising area of research that relies on destroying human embryos. And yet Bush's repeated claims to be "the first president ever to allow funding" for human embryonic stem cell research (made, for instance, during the second nationally televised presidential debate in fall 2004) are not accurate. Here, he lays claim to a stem cell legacy that isn't his. Truth is, Bush's immediate predecessor, Bill Clinton, was a far greater supporter of human embryonic stem cell research. ... it was the Clinton Administration that first opened the door to federal funding. " [PBS Nova, The Politics of Stem Cells, 4/13/2005]

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/dispatches/050413.html>

But does not stop the administration from saying he did....

- **Laura Bush:** "My husband is the first president to provide federal funding for stem cell research." [Remarks at the Republican Convention, 9/1/2004]
- **Orrin Hatch:** "I commend President Bush for being the first President to take the initial steps necessary to allow federal funding of research using some stem cell lines." [Hatch Release, 2/16/2005]
- **Scott McClellan:** "Well, I think that the President has made his views pretty clear when it comes to stem cell research. We were the first President to -- the President was the first to allow for federal funding of embryonic stem cell research." [WH Briefing, 5/18/2005]

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- **Trent Duffy:** The President's stem cell research policy is very clear. He was the first President to authorize embryonic stem cell research in 2001, under a principle that human life should not be created for the purpose of destroying it. And he continues to stand firmly behind that principle. And I would note that there has been tens of millions of dollars spent on embryonic stem cell research at the federal government under this President and under his policy. So that's where he stands on that, and he continues to stand behind his policy. [WH Briefing, 5/19/2005]
- **FOX News Commentator Chris Wallace:** As you well know, Mr. Bush is the first president to authorize funding for stem cell research. But he has insisted that there only be use of existing stem cell lines, not the use of embryos that are leftover in fertility clinics that would be thrown away. And he said this week that he would veto a House bill that would authorize federal funding for using those embryos that already exist. [Fox News Sunday, 5/22/2005]