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A New Threat to Human Embryos—Watch These Developments Closely

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The federal government's policy on embryonic stem cell research, announced by President George W. Bush on August 9, 2001, is now facing a challenge from Congress. The move is led by a group of 'moderate' Republican members of Congress who are seeking to pass legislation that would expand the policy. Their effort would allow the destruction of human embryos that would be donated through fertility clinics. The legislation, known in the House of Representatives as the "[Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005](#)," is co-sponsored by [Rep. Michael N. Castle](#) (R-Del.), who claims to have more than enough votes to pass the bill in the House.

Remember what is at stake here—nothing less than human dignity. If a human embryo can be turned into mere material for medical research, every human life is discounted. Meanwhile, the real progress on the stem-cell research front has taken place with research using adult stem cells, which can be obtained without the destruction of a human embryo.

The Castle bill is expected to reach the House floor before Memorial Day. Asked if President Bush would veto any effort to expand the destruction of embryos, White House spokesman Scott McClellan avoided a direct answer on Wednesday, but stated that the President would oppose any change in the policy. [Rep. Christopher Smith](#) (R-N.J.) is sponsoring a competing bill that would expand the use of cells harvested from umbilical cords. This research would not involve the destruction of human embryos. Make your convictions on this issue known now.

FURTHER RESOURCES: President George W. Bush's [announcement](#) of the federal stem cell research policy, August 9, 2001; [The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005](#); a report of an unusual hearing held this week in Chicago from [The Chicago Tribune](#); news reports from [The New York Times](#), [The Washington Times](#), [The Washington Post](#); [CNN](#). [Transcript](#) of Wednesday's White House Press Briefing. Rep. Chrisitopher Smith's stem cell research [Web site](#).

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