

Mississippi lawmakers join chorus asking President to cease federal funding for research on live human embryos

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Editor

Mississippi's two U.S. senators and three of four U.S. representatives were among 94 members of the U.S. Congress urging U.S. President Donald Trump last week to put an end to live human embryonic stem cell research at the taxpayer-funded National Institutes of Health (NIH).

"We write today to urge you to issue an Executive Order to end taxpayer funding of human embryonic stem cell (hESC) research and to redirect these scarce federal research dollars toward alternatives that make a real difference for patients," stated the Sept. 4 letter to Trump signed by Sens. Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, along with Reps. Trent Kelly, Michael Guest, and Steven Palazzo, all Republicans.

The letter was signed exclusively by Republicans, and it was not clear whether the letter was circulated among Democrats. The name of Rep. Bennie Thompson, Mississippi's sole congressional Democrat, does not appear on the letter.

Pro-life organizations are opposed to the research because they say live human embryos are destroyed in the process. That is a fact, according to the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity at Trinity International University, affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America, in Deerfield, Ill.: "Human embryonic stem cells are the cells from which all 200+

kinds of tissue in the human body originate. Typically, they are derived from human embryos – often those from fertility clinics who are left over from assisted reproduction attempts (e.g., in vitro fertilization). When stem cells are obtained from living human embryos, the harvesting of such cells necessitates destruction of the embryos.”

The Trinity statement does not describe the origin of embryonic stem cells which are not “often those from fertility clinics,” but abortion clinics associated with Planned Parenthood are known to sell baby parts obtained from abortions.

Wicker was co-author of the Dickey-Wicker Amendment, first adopted in 1996, that prohibits federal funds from being used to support research in which human embryos are destroyed.

“Funding for embryonic research at NIH has averaged between \$250 and \$300 million dollars over the past three years and yielded no proof of a single patient’s life being saved through embryonic stem cell treatments,” the letter to Trump stated. “The expenditures for hESC research are inconsistent with longstanding federal law protecting human embryos. Human embryos are young human beings, and human life should never be expended as a mere means of benefiting another. We urge you to bring an end to NIH’s unethical and ineffective hESC research efforts and support research that will respect the sanctity of human life and deliver real benefits for patients.”