

Senator Frist's Support for Expanding Embryonic Stem Cell Research May Break Senate Logjam

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist's (R-TN) July 29 announcement of support for expanding the Administration's current embryonic stem cell policy could facilitate a post-Labor Day vote on S 471, the *Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act*, co-sponsored by Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Tom Harkin. S 471 is the Senate version of HR 810, which was passed by the House in late May and expands the number of embryonic stem cell lines available for federal funding beyond those specified in the Administration's August 2001 policy. NAEVR network members sent hundreds of letters of support for HR 810.

In an August 2 letter, NAEVR President Dr. Stephen Ryan praised Dr. Frist's leadership and requested that the Senate bring S 471/HR 810 with no amendments to the floor for a vote as soon as possible upon the return from the August recess. The Senate still needs to resolve the issue of six other stem cell bills that could siphon away support from S 471.

NAEVR has actively participated with nearly 100 other research advocacy organizations in the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research (CAMR), which has taken the lead in educating Congress. NAEVR will alert our community about a Senate vote and appropriate messages of support to send through the NAEVR Web site at www.eyeresearch.org. ■