

# WORLD & NATION

## Bush faces pressure on embryonic stem-cell funding

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The debate heated up this week as President Bush moved toward a decision on whether to allow federal funding of research using embryonic stem cells.

On one side were those, including top Catholic officials, who called the destruction of human embryos for research wrong; they wanted research using adult stem cells to continue, but sought to preserve the ban on the use of embryonic cells.

On the other were those who urged the expansion of federally funded human stem-cell research to include embryonic cells; they argued that the ban restricts the ability of researchers to explore potentially promising roads to cure diseases.

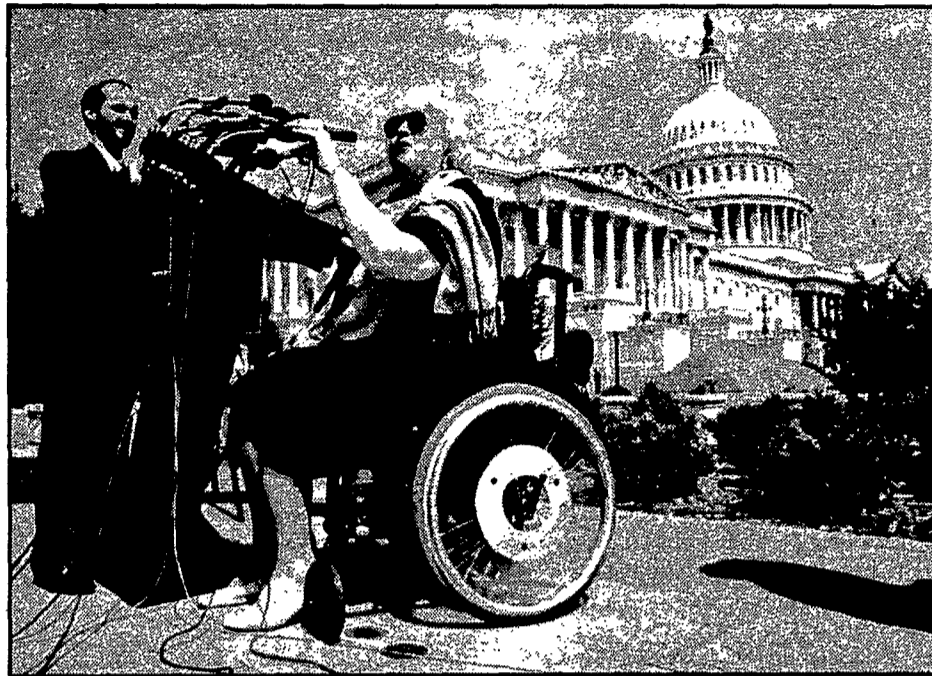
In a hand-delivered letter at the end of June, Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged Bush to retain the ban on funding research involving the destruction of human embryos, calling it "one of the most important decisions of your presidency."

A full-page ad July 9 in *The Washington Times* declared, "Remove stem cells from embryos and real persons really die. ... Real scientists understand this."

The ad was sponsored by the American Bioethics Advisory Commission, a division of the American Life League. Featuring photos of 20 prominent advocates of embryonic stem-cell research, beneath each name it said "embryonic person" followed by the year in which the person was presumably conceived.

White House press secretary Ari Fleischer July 9 declined to say when the president would reach a decision on stem-cell research.

*The New York Times* reported July 4 that Bush's own advisers were split not only on what he should do about embryonic stem-



Ken Cedeno/CNS

Mary Jane Owen, director of the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities, speaks at the U.S. Capitol June 8 in support of a bill that would provide funding for adult stem-cell research. She said legislation introduced by Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., "provides Catholics with an opportunity to support this."

cell research but on when he should do it.

*The Times* said some advisers called the decision too important to rush into, while others were urging the president to decide before a July 23 meeting with Pope John Paul II, "so that he would neither offend Catholics by appearing to ignore the pontiff's entreaties nor appear to be influenced by the pope."

An early June survey sponsored by the bishops' conference as part of a broader public opinion poll found that when respondents were informed that embryonic stem-cell research entails destruction of the embryo, 70 percent opposed federal funding for it.

When asked if they supported federal funding for research using only adult stem

cells or both adult and embryonic cells, 67 percent backed the first option and only 18 percent thought both should be used. Some did not answer or rejected any such funding.

On the other hand, a subsequent ABC News/Beliefnet poll — using a question that did not mention the possible use of adult stem cells for such research, and referring to the embryos in question as "extra embryos" that will be discarded if not used for medical research — found two-thirds of the respondents in favor of federal funding for such research.

Writing to the Culture of Life Foundation in May, Bush said, "I oppose federal funding for stem-cell research that involves destroying living human embryos. I sup-

port innovative medical research on life-threatening and debilitating diseases, including promising research on stem cells from adult tissue."

Congress faces conflicting bills on the issue. Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., and Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash., have introduced parallel Senate and House bills that would authorize funding of research on human embryonic stem cells. Rep. Christopher H. Smith, R-N.J., has introduced a House bill that would increase funding for stem cell research but would limit it to nonembryonic cells.

Tommy Thompson, secretary of Health and Human Services, the department under which stem-cell research is funded, is among the advocates of using embryos.

In a July 2 statement, however, three Republican House leaders — House Majority Leader Richard Arney, House Majority Whip Tom DeLay and House Republican Conference Chairman J.C. Watts Jr. — jointly called on Bush to "uphold current law and prohibit federal funding of embryonic stem-cell research while promoting adult stem-cell alternatives."

Some support for using embryos in research exists even among abortion opponents. One prominent example is former Sen. Connie Mack, a Florida Republican, who recently wrote a column supporting such research.

The National Institutes of Health last August proposed guidelines that would permit embryonic stem-cell research, arguing in part that adult stem cells for all cell and tissue types have not been found in humans and that these cells are difficult to isolate and grow in sufficient numbers for treatment.

Do No Harm: The Coalition of Americans for Research Ethics announced July 9 that it has sent NIH a detailed analysis, citing published scientific literature on adult stem cells, to show that NIH "has failed to adequately acknowledge the significant advances and potential applications using adult stem cells."

The analysis — posted on the Internet at [www.stemcellresearch.org](http://www.stemcellresearch.org) — also highlights shortcomings in the use of embryonic stem cells. The coalition said these problems are frequently overlooked by advocates of embryonic use.

## Vatican seeks review of Milwaukee plans

By John Norton  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican said aspects of a planned \$4.5 million renovation of Milwaukee's cathedral violated church and liturgical law, asking Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland to revise the project.

In a letter faxed to the archbishop June 30, Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez, head of the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, objected to moving the main altar to the center of the cathedral, coupled with placement of an apparently prominent organ in the apse where the original high altar was.

He objected to the size and location of a eucharistic chapel, the removal of two confessionals, and the inclusion of certain artwork. In addition, he wrote, "it would seem" that the high altar with its domed canopy, "should be retained, given that it is a most suitable location for the reservation of the Most Blessed Sacrament."

At a press conference in Milwaukee July 2, archdiocesan communications director Jerry Topczewski said the letter clarifies the areas of renovation in question and serves as a go-ahead to proceed with the work now under way.

In Washington, Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement of support for Archbishop Weakland.

"I am deeply saddened that the dispute ... has not been settled to their mutual satisfaction," he said. "I have spoken to Archbishop Weakland and I am confident that he is following the proper procedures in this dispute and that he has responded faithfully to the questions of the congregation," Bishop Fiorenza said. "His broth-

er bishops join me in the prayerful hope that the dispute can be settled quickly for the peace and unity of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee."

Topczewski noted that "Nowhere does (Cardinal) Medina say, 'Stop the project.'"

In late May, the congregation asked Archbishop Weakland to halt the renovation while it conducted its investigation, requested by renovation opponents who hired a Rome-based canon lawyer.

In the June 30 fax, Cardinal Medina said "the first serious obstacle" was the "incongruity" of the proposed floor plan — which moves the altar forward and places seating all around it — with the church's rectangular shape, "pre-established by the architectural style."

Cardinal Medina said moving the sanctuary weakened its "necessary distinctiveness" with respect to the rest of the church space. The proposed addition of a "crown" over the altar does not remedy "placing a new and visually imposing organ" in the cathedral's "natural focal point," he said.

Topczewski said the organ has not been designed yet and the sole basis for estimating (its) size was an artist's rendering.

The cardinal said the proposed Blessed Sacrament chapel is too small, listing its size as "approximately 28 square meters." Topczewski said the actual chapel size will be 53.49 square meters.

Cardinal Medina also said reducing the number of confessionals from four to two would not meet the needs of the faithful.

Father Carl Last, cathedral rector, told the *Catholic Herald*, archdiocesan newspaper, "We have four confessionals, but ... only one has been used in the past 10 years. I'm here all alone. I can only be in one place at one time."

Finally, Cardinal Medina objected to

some proposed artwork that depicts persons who are not formally approved for veneration.

"I'm not sure what they're talking about," Father Last said. "It could be about the atrium, where we were going to feature people who have served the poor, the compassion of Christ," such as Mother Teresa and slain Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero. "Inside the church we have just saints," he said.

Jesuit Father Keith Pecklers, a liturgical expert in Rome, said the congregation's intervention was "unprecedented" and, like a recent Vatican document on liturgical text translations, "calls into question the whole concept of collegiality" and the authority of local bishops.

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