

July 14, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
U.S. Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
U.S. Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the 216th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I am writing to thank you for your sponsorship of S. 471. The General Assembly, which met in Richmond, Virginia last summer, reaffirmed the "Ethical Guidelines for Fetal Tissue and Stem Cell Research" approved by the 213th General Assembly (2001) in order to add the faithful voice of the PC(USA) to the rapidly progressive debate about fetal tissue and stem cell research.

In 2001, the General Assembly concluded:

Therefore, the 213th General Assembly (2001) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms the use of fetal tissue and embryonic tissue for vital research. Our respect for life includes respect for the embryo and fetus, and we affirm that decisions about embryos and fetuses need to be made with responsibility. Therefore, we believe that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other faith groups should educate their members in making these very difficult ethical decisions. With careful regulation, we affirm the use of human stem cell tissue for research that may result in the restoring of health to those suffering from serious illness. We affirm our support for stem cell research, recognizing that this research moves to a new and challenging frontier. We recognize the need for continuing, informed public dialogue and equitable sharing of information of the results of stem cell research. It is only with such public dialogue and information sharing that our diverse society can build a foundation for responsible movement toward this frontier that offers enormous hope and challenge.

In the rationale for the action in 2004, commissioners noted:

In light of current national and international discussions pertaining to stem cell research, it is important our denominational voice be once again heard. And as we remember former President Ronald Reagan and share in expressing our compassion and condolences to Nancy Reagan, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through its General Assembly, should make our feelings visible by affirming the theological and moral support of the "Ethical Guidelines for Fetal Tissue and Stem Cell Research."

I urge you to reflect upon the Assembly's resolution, which is attached, when the Senate considers S. 471 and other legislation related to fetal tissue and stem cell research. If you have questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me orCarolynn Race at (202) 543-1126. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory
Director, Presbyterian Washington Office
Enclosure (1)