

# Catholic League Participates in Protest Against Human Embryo Research

On December 5, the Catholic League was one of more than 70 organizations and individuals who signed a statement prepared by the American Life League protesting the use of human embryos for research and experimentation, as well as the federal funding for such research. The statement was released at a press conference held at the National Press Club, and received coverage in the *Washington Times*.

The statement, titled *No Public Money for Unethical Human Embryo Research*, calls on lawmakers to "enact and enforce laws and policies which forbid direct support for such procedures." It also states that institutions or individuals "be made ineligible to receive any public money as long as they conduct such unethical human embryo research."

At meetings just prior to the release of the statement, a key advisory committee at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued final guidelines and unanimously accepted a report saying such research should be federally funded, despite public protest to the contrary. Following the decision by the committee, President Clinton announced his opposition to federal funding of the creation of human embryos for research purposes. The final decision on funding now rests with Dr. Harold Varmus, NIH Director. (Prior to the meeting Varmus claimed to have statutory authority from Congress to use federal funds for any research proposal for which he agrees.)

Because most of the guidelines remain unopposed by both the president and the ad hoc committee of the NIH, the American Life League is looking to lawmakers. Members of Congress are urged to work to insure "that every single human being, from

fertilization on, is equally protected as a human subject, not as raw material to be used, abused and discarded."

This is the second time the League has registered a complaint with the NIH over this issue. In April, 1994, Dr. Donohue wrote to Dr. Varmus urging the NIH not to pursue federal funding, comparing the current proposals to the endorsement in the not too distant past of "risky medical experimentation on African Americans." Donohue highlighted the irony of the NIH's acceptance of embryonic research when society today condemns even animal experimentation. He added that "Even those who are undecided on the status of the human embryo ought to have learned by now that doubt is sufficient grounds for saying no to another round of questionable medical research."

The most recent statement, which was signed by the Catholic League, is scheduled to be reprinted in a full-page ad in the January 19, 1995 *Washington Times*. Other groups which signed the statement included the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, American Center for Law and Justice, Priests for Life, Daughters of St. Paul, Women for Faith & Family, Concerned Women of America, Eagle Forum, and the Ethics and Public Policy Center.