

# STEM CELL DEBATE GETS UGLY

The U.S. Senate will vote today on three pieces of legislation regarding stem cell research. Two of the bills are non-controversial: one would ban “fetal farms,” i.e., growing human embryos in a human or animal with the intent of harvesting stem cells, and the other promotes adult stem cell research. The controversial bill would expand federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, among others, is opposed to the controversial bill.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue defended the bishops' position:

“This debate is getting ugly. Instead of making a reasoned argument in favor of embryonic stem cell research, some advocates have chosen to play the anti-religion card. For example, Senator Arlen Specter, a strong supporter of abortion-on-demand and euthanasia-on-demand, found it necessary yesterday to make his case for unlimited stem cell research by dragging up Galileo and Pope Boniface VIII, casting them as Catholic victim and victimizer. Oh, yes, he also managed to say that those who oppose embryonic stem cell research are on a par with those who once opposed rail travel, though he did not cite Vatican opposition to trains.

“True to form, the *Los Angeles Times* blasted the Republican Party for ‘allowing religious conservatives to stall medical progress for nearly five years.’ But no one topped a new online group, The Campaign to Defend the Constitution (DEFCON): in a full-page ad in today's *New York Times*, it blamed ‘a few religious extremists’ for blocking embryonic stem cell research, holding that they were ‘exercising undue political influence’ by ‘imposing [their] will on all Americans.’ In other words, those who don't support killing human beings *de novo* are theocrats who disrespect the

democratic process.

“Cardinal William Keeler, who speaks for the bishops on life issues, is correct when he argues that ‘Technical progress that makes humans themselves into raw material for research is in fact a regress in our humanity.’ Everyone is free to disagree, but under no circumstances can Catholic baiting be tolerated.”