

## Judiciary Committee Advances Public Ban on Human Cloning

By advancing LB 606, the Judiciary Committee has raised a host of questions for Nebraskans who care about the sanctity of human life. Among them are:

- What are the proper boundaries of scientific exploration?
- What good is a public ban on cloning if it is still legal in the private sector?
- What is the difference between therapeutic and reproductive cloning?
- Why does Family First oppose a ban on reproductive cloning?
- Why is embryonic stem cell research morally problematic?
- Why is there so much concern about legislating a practice that isn't possible right now?

We want to address these questions in three parts. **First, if cloning isn't even possible yet, why is there such controversy over the legislation?** This is a practical question. We believe it's better to make decisions in advance about how we will approach important bio-ethical questions. If we wait to craft legislation until certain practices become commonplace (and therefore accepted or normative) it will be very difficult to be unbiased about the moral implications of such practices. In fact, numerous entities are currently attempting to make human cloning commonplace. Thus, by crafting policy in advance, we will have guidelines in place before things get off the ground with human cloning. It will be much more difficult to pass thoughtful guidelines after the fact.

Secondly, **why is Family First and the pro-life community opposed to cloning?** This is probably the most misunderstood question when it comes to cloning and embryonic stem cell research. It is impossible to understand why there is such debate about this issue unless you understand one simple fact: *The moral status of the embryo determines the morality of embryonic stem cell research.* If the human embryo is a person, then we are not justified in destroying it to harvest stem cells to conduct speculative medical research. If the embryo is not a person, no defense is needed for embryonic stem cell research.

It is our position that the embryo *is* a human person and therefore the state ought to accord it the full rights of personhood. Robert George defines an embryo as follows:

*Human embryos are distinct organisms that, unless prevented from doing so, actively develop themselves to more mature stages of the human organisms they already are with their distinctness and identity intact.*

In other words, embryos are human based on their distinctness and identity, and have the same right of personhood that you or I have. And just as you and I have a moral and legal right not to be killed (short of being found guilty of a capital crime), the embryo shares this right. Thus, it is immoral to create human life specifically to destroy it for speculative medical research.

Those who argue against the personhood of the embryo typically use one of four arguments:

1. The size of the embryo disqualifies it from personhood.
2. The early level of development disqualifies it from personhood.
3. The environment of the embryo disqualifies it from personhood.
4. The level of development of the embryo disqualifies it from personhood.

However, none of these four arguments is logically valid, for none of these characteristics are morally relevant. For more developed responses to these four assertions, please visit [Stand to Reason's website](#).

Because embryonic stem cell research necessitates the destruction (death) of the embryo, we are opposed to embryonic stem cell research. Nonetheless, we're frequently asked to accept a "compromise" ban that would ban "reproductive" cloning but not "therapeutic" cloning. (Reproductive cloning refers to embryos cloned for the purpose of implantation, therapeutic cloning refers to embryos cloned for their stem cells.) However, this is unacceptable because it actually represents a step backward. The only difference between these two "types" of cloning is intent. Therefore, to ban reproductive cloning would necessitate the destruction of all cloned embryos. In other words, any embryos produced by cloning would necessarily be killed (or discarded) under such a ban. This does not represent a partial step forward but actually a state mandated death sentence upon an entire class of innocent persons.

However, this is a separate question from the third question: **Why does Family First support a ban on the use of public funds for cloning, if private funds may still be allowed for the research?** This is also a practical question. While we would like to see a complete ban on embryonic stem-cell research in Nebraska, currently there is no funding restriction. We believe that a public funding ban, while imperfect, still represents a step forward for making Nebraska a state where human life is treated with dignity.

We encourage you to access some valuable educational resources about cloning and the humanity of the embryo. One is from [pro-life apologist Scott Klusendorf](#), and the other is a conversation between [Greg Koukl of Stand to Reason and Professor Robert George](#).