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KENNEDY, BIPARTISAN COALITION DISCUSS SENATE VOTE ON STEM CELL RESEARCH

Washington, D.C. – Today, Senators Edward M. Kennedy, Tom Harkin, and a bipartisan coalition of Senators will joined the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research (CAMR) for a press conference. The group urged the Senate to pass the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (S.5).

S. 5 is a modified version of H.R. 810, which 63 Senators supported last year. The only change is that the bill now also includes the text of last year's S. 2754 (the Specter-Santorum "alternatives" bill), which passed the Senate by a vote of 100-0 but never cleared the House. The new S. 5 combines the two stem cell bills that the Senate overwhelmingly approved last year but did not become law.

****Below are Senator Kennedy's remarks, as prepared for delivery:**

"Last year, Congress passed bipartisan legislation to break the chains that had held back promise on stem cell research. We voted for hope, for progress, and for life.

We are here once more to speak of the hope that stem cell research brings to patients suffering from diabetes, spinal injuries, Parkinson's Disease, and many other illnesses.

There are deep convictions on both sides of this issue. But most Americans agree that Congress should vote for hope and progress. I urge President Bush to respect their wishes and to sign this legislation into law.

When breakthrough cures that can end suffering and prolong life are within reach, it is wrong of the Administration to put irresponsible politics ahead of responsible science.

The time has come to say, "Enough! No more."

We should say yes to the teenager with diabetes who is condemned to a life of endless tests, injections and hospital stays.

We should say yes to the father with spinal cord injury that one day he may be able to walk and support his family again.

We should say yes to the grandmother with Alzheimer's that she might cherish her family memories in her golden years.

Millions of patients and their families, as well as leaders in science and medicine – including the Director of NIH – have joined the call to end these unreasonable barriers to progress.

I urge our colleagues in the Senate to listen to those calls, and to vote once again for legislation that offers the promise of better health and a fuller life to so many Americans.

Let us hope that the President will consider this issue anew, and put aside his veto pen for the sake of life."