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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXECUTIVE ORDER ON EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS 'A SAD VICTORY OF POLITICS OVER SCIENCE AND ETHICS,' SAYS CARDINAL RIGALI

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Justin Rigali, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, today called President Obama's executive order on embryonic stem cell research "a sad victory of politics over science and ethics." Under the order, for the first time in U.S. history, federal tax dollars will be used to encourage researchers to destroy live human embryos for stem cell research. Cardinal Rigali also cited a January 16 letter in which Cardinal Francis George, president of the USCCB, urged President-elect Obama not to issue such an order. Cardinal Rigali's statement follows:

"President Obama's new executive order on embryonic stem cell research is a sad victory of politics over science and ethics. This action is morally wrong because it encourages the destruction of innocent human life, treating vulnerable human beings as mere products to be harvested. It also disregards the values of millions of American taxpayers who oppose research that requires taking human life. Finally, it ignores the fact that ethically sound means for advancing stem cell science and medical treatments are readily available and in need of increased support.

"In his January 16th letter to President-elect Obama, Cardinal George, writing as President of the USCCB, cited three reasons why such destructive research is 'especially pointless at this time':

- 'First, basic research in the capabilities of embryonic stem cells can be and is being pursued using the currently eligible cell lines as well as the hundreds of lines produced with nonfederal funds since 2001.
- 'Second, recent startling advances in reprogramming adult cells into embryonic-like stem cells – hailed by the journal *Science* as the scientific breakthrough of the year – are said by many scientists to be making embryonic stem cells irrelevant to medical progress.
- 'Third, adult and cord blood stem cells are now known to have great versatility, and are increasingly being used to reverse serious illnesses and even help rebuild damaged organs. To divert scarce funds away from these promising avenues for research and treatment toward the avenue that is most morally controversial as well as most medically speculative would be a sad victory of politics over science.'

"If the government wants to invest in hope for cures and promote ethically sound science, it should use our tax monies for research that everyone, at every stage of human development, can live with."

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