



*March 11, 2010*

## **Higher Ed Budget Becomes Stem Cell Battleground**

The Higher Education budget has become ensnared in the fight over embryonic stem cell research following the passage of Proposal 2 in 2008 that lifted the ban on research.

Sen. Tom **GEORGE** (R-Texas Twp.), who headed the campaign against Proposal 2, successfully added an amendment to [SB 1157](#) sponsored by Appropriations Higher Education Subcommittee Chair Tony **STAMAS** (R-Midland).

The amendment would require any public university that's received donated human embryos to submit a report to the Department of Community Health (DCH) director by Dec. 1. The report would include the number of human embryos and stem cell lines received in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010; the number used for research; the number held in storage; the number of lines created; and the number of research projects using embryonic stem cells.

George reported a package of embryonic stem cell regulations from his Health Policy Committee last month, but they are not on the Senate calendar.

"This is another way to achieve the same end," George said of the amendment.

The amendment moved 5-2, with Sen. Jim **BARCIA** ( D-Bay City ) crossing over. That was the same vote on the \$1.57 billion FY 2011 budget, with Sens. Liz **BRATER** (D-Ann Arbor) and Glenn **ANDERSON** (D-Westland) voting no.

Brater complained that the amendment was not presented in advance so as to get feedback from universities, although she said, "On the face of it, it looks pretty straightforward." But she was concerned that this was amending a constitutional amendment, which would require a three-quarters vote in the Legislature.

"Are we trying to circumvent the will of the voters here?" Brater asked, adding that federal laws on embryonic stem cell research are "explicit and comprehensive."

George said that the amendment does not alter Proposal 2 and it's merely about transparency. He said that the state requires 27 reports from universities already.

"It does not in any way interfere with the constitutional measure," he said. ". . . I challenge anyone to show how this interferes with research, sends scientists away or overturns the will of the people."

As *MIRS* broke on Wednesday, the Higher Ed budget contains a 3.1 percent across-the-board cut for the state's 15 public universities (See "[Higher Ed To Take Senate Hit](#), 3/10/10).

That's a cut of \$47.8 million over Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM**'s budget recommendation, which held universities harmless. The overall budget is \$42.8 million less than her recommendation. She has said she will veto any budget that cuts education.

[SB 1157](#) restores the Tuition Grant Program, which provides scholarships to students attending private colleges. The \$31.7 million was wiped out in Granholm's budget, something she has attempted before but been blocked by the Legislature. The bill also includes \$6.2 million for the Tuition Incentive Program that the Governor cut.

"This budget shifts money from public schools to private schools in the Tuition Grant," Brater said while explaining why she was voting against the budget.

The bill also restores an \$80,000 earmark for the Future Farmers of America. It adds intent language for universities to use a competitive bidding process for custodial and food services.

There also is a buy American requirement proposed by Granholm, as well as one to buy Michigan vehicles