



## MIRS Capitol Capsule

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### **RTL: 'It's Just Reporting'**

Right to Life of Michigan (RTL) is not attempting to use this year's Higher Education budget (🐾 [SB 1157](#)) to reverse the results of 2008's Proposal 2, organization officials said today.

RTL's legislative director Ed **RIVET** held a sparsely attended news conference this morning aimed at debunking what he called "misinformation and disinformation" about RTL's position.

"For those who voted for Proposal 2, all I can say is you won," Rivet said. "Embryos from fertility treatment may be donated for research with informed consent."

Then Rivet went on to say that nothing in the RTL-supported language of the Senate-passed version of 🐾 [SB 1157](#) would violate Proposal 2. The provision requires that any public university that receives state money report to the Department of Community Health annually the number of human embryo stem cell lines received by the university among four other similar reporting requirements.

The language RTL wants in 🐾 [SB 1157](#) is one of the biggest -- if not the biggest -- sticking point in the differences between the versions passed by the Democrat-controlled House and the GOP-controlled Senate. The Senate version has the language. The House version doesn't.

*MIRS* asked stem cell research advocate and former House Speaker Rick [JOHNSON](#) about Rivet's argument.

"There are several bills over in Health Policy committees he could put that in and we could debate it there," Johnson said. "This is policy, it doesn't belong in a one-year budget bill. Doing this in a budget bill is not the normal way of trying to get something like this done.

"It would be fine to have a debate on this," Johnson continued. "But putting it in a budget bill right after it was passed by the voters . . . I mean, we should give them a little time to get it started. This way of going about it just isn't proper."

House Speaker Andy [DILLON](#) (D-Redford Twp.) worked his way around the fact that a majority of the House is pro-life by letting the language be put in by floor amendment through a roll call vote and then stripping it out by fast gavel.

Following Rivet's presentation, *MIRS* asked him if, going forward, RTL would be willing to pull endorsements back from lawmakers in the general election as part of the battle over the wording.

Rivet hesitated to go that far. Instead, he steered the issue toward the conference committee on 🐾 [SB 1157](#) and the budget negotiations.

"They know it's a budget bill and it has to get done," Rivet said. "We've talked with House Appropriations Committee Chair George [CUSHINGBERRY](#) (D-Detroit). He seemed very willing to listen. I think it will all come down to the old-fashioned craft of compromise."

As he was evaluating the process Rivet mentioned that he had not expected Dillon to fast gavel the RTL wording out of 🐾 [SB 1157](#) after the House had voted to put it in.

"I didn't think he would that," Rivet said. "I thought he'd just have the vote."

In his presentation, Rivet listed what Proposal 2 did not do. Among the items was what RTL claims is all it wants universities to do -- report.

"It did not authorize research to be conducted in secret," Rivet said. "It did not prohibit monitoring and public accountability."

"Proposal 2 did not provide an ivory tower for universities," Rivet continued. "It did not provide them with a get-out-of-jail-free card. What we're asking are not unreasonable questions."

Rivet read off comments by university officials and lawmakers that claimed the language RTL wants placed in 🐾 [SB 1157](#) would undermine or reverse the results of the passage of Proposal 2 in 2008.

"What they're saying goes way beyond the pale of credibility," Rivet said. "We're talking about a reporting requirement."

RTL issued a news release following the news conference titled: "Right to Life Challenges Legislative Committee: Sort Fact from Fiction on Embryo Research."