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Don't "play God" with human cloning, Libertarian Party warns politicians

WASHINGTON, DC — Cloning — whether of animals or humans — is one of the “most exciting and important scientific breakthroughs of the 20th Century” and should not be prohibited by the government, the Libertarian Party said today.

“Politicians should not have veto power over the creation of new life — especially human life,” said Steve Dasbach, the party’s chairman. “That’s why the Libertarian Party supports reproductive freedom of choice for Americans — whether they choose to reproduce using the traditional method, or artificial insemination, or in-vitro fertilization, or cloning.”

Cloning, once thought impossible, has suddenly become a hotly debated topic after scientists in Scotland successfully cloned an adult sheep. Biologists say the same technique could be used to clone human beings — making exact genetic duplicates of individuals.

But some groups are demanding that the technology be banned by the government. A 1994 National Institutes of Health panel declared that human cloning is unethical and should not be allowed, and the Biotechnology Industry Organization said it should be “prohibited by law.”

“Yes, cloning of human beings does raise serious ethical issues, but those issues are best addressed by individuals, doctors, and scientists — not politicians,” said Dasbach. “It would be a shame if frightened politicians slammed the door on one of the most exciting and important scientific breakthroughs of the 20th Century.”

If cloning research is banned, millions of people could suffer, warned Dasbach. “Animal cloning might produce life-saving drugs,” he said. “Human cloning might help eliminate genetic diseases. Do we want to give politicians the power to play God over the lives of suffering people — or, just as bad, give them the power to ban a new, cloned human life before it begins?”

Dasbach said he understood the squeamishness about cloning human beings — but “it’s important to separate the reality of cloning from fantasy,” he argued.

“Critics warn that cloning could create armies of identical Frankenstein-like people,” he said. “But cloning can’t recreate an individual human being, with his or her unique personality, beliefs, talents, and goals. It can only reproduce a genetically identical ‘blank slate’ upon which a new personality — formed by experience and learning — will emerge. The only difference is that with cloning, the genetic material would come from one parent, rather than two.”

The Libertarian Party Platform does not specifically address the issue of human cloning, but does state: “We condemn attempts at the federal, state, or local level to cripple the advance of science by governmental restriction of research.”

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