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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the level of public support for the establishment of a state funded institute within New York State to regulate and fund stem cell research similar in scope to the proposition recently passed by California in November 2004. These survey findings are from the Empire State Poll (ESP) 2005, a general survey of New York State residents who are at least 18 years of age. The School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) Survey Research Institute (SRI) conducts the poll annually.

The poll was conducted between February 24 and March 24, 2005 and consists of 800 interviews with residents from both upstate and downstate New York using a RDD sample. "Downstate" is defined as New York, Rockland, Kings, Richmond, Westchester, Suffolk, Queens, Nassau, and Bronx counties, with the remaining counties of the state defined as "upstate." The response rate was 22.9% according to AAPOR standards. The survey was administered in both English and Spanish. All results presented in this report have been weighted based on geography (upstate vs. downstate) to account for population distribution and are otherwise representative of other key demographic criteria (gender, race, income, employment). The margin of error for reported statewide results is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Key Findings of Survey

Nearly half of all respondents to the ESP 2005 (45%) would be likely to vote for a proposition establishing a state funded institute that publicly funds and manages stem cell research within New York State, while 26% of the respondents would be unlikely to support such a proposition, and 27% are undecided or feel they need more information. (See Table 1)

- Despite substantial demographic and political differences between upstate and downstate NY, there were no significant differences in levels of support for stem cell funding between regions. (See Table 1)
- Of those respondents who DID NOT support a proposition funding stem cell research in New York State, the primary given reasons for opposition were: stem cell research was unethical or immoral (34%), the financial expense to the state budget (21%), or opposed retrieving stem cells from aborted fetuses (18%). (See Table 2)
- Approximately half of Democrats and Independents support state funding of stem cell research compared to one-third of Republicans. A plurality of Protestants (38%) and Catholics (42%) would be likely to vote in support of stem cell research and two-thirds of self-described atheists or agnostics would do the same. (See Table 3)

- Older respondents (56+ years old) are less likely (41% vs. 50%) to support such a proposal than younger respondents (18-35 yrs old). Respondents from high-income households (\$75k +) are almost twice as likely (59% vs. 34%) to vote in support of state funding of stem cell research as compared to respondents from low-income households (\$35k or less). (See Table 3)
- Highly educated respondents (some form of graduate education) are twice as likely (60% vs. 30%) to vote in support of state funding for stem cell research than respondents with a low level of education (high school education or less). (See Table 3)
- White respondents to the ESP 2005 are more likely to vote in support of a Californian style proposition on stem cell research than non-white respondents (50% vs. 35%), the same for male respondents compared to female respondents (49% vs. 41%). (See Table 3)

Detailed Summary Tables

The ESP 2005 asked respondents to the poll the following question regarding funding stem cell research within New York State:

Now I have some questions on a completely different topic. As you may know, President Bush has limited Federal funding of stem cell research to existing stem cell lines and has curtailed funding for the development of new stem cell lines. This past November, citizens in the state of California passed a proposition that authorizes state bonds to fund stem cell research within California. Specifically, the initiative establishes a California Institute for Regenerative Medicine to regulate and fund stem cell research and establishes a constitutional right to conduct such research and an oversight committee. However, it prohibits funding of human reproductive cloning research. The bond proposition costs the state a total \$6 Billion over thirty years and provides funding.

If a similar proposition were placed before voters in New York State, how likely would you be to vote for such an initiative? Would you say you would be VERY UNLIKELY, SOMEWHAT UNLIKELY, SOMEWHAT LIKELY, VERY LIKELY, or UNDECIDE/NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Table 1 provides the overall poll results with the percentage of respondents who replied they were likely to vote in support, unlikely to vote in support, undecided/need more information, or refused to answer for upstate NY, downstate NY, and statewide.

Table 1 Public Support For State Funding of Stem Cell Research in NYS (%)

Support for Stem Cell Funding	Upstate NY	Downstate NY	NYS
Likely to Support	43	46	45
Unlikely to Support	29	24	26
Undecided / Need to know more	27	28	27
Refused	2	2	2

In addition the ESP 2005 asked respondents who were unlikely to support public funding of stem cell research the primary reason why they would be unlikely to vote for such an initiative. Table 2 provides the percentage of respondents for each reason given.

Table 2 Primary Reason DO NOT support State Funding of Stem Cell Research in NYS

Given Reason	%
Stem cell research is unethical/ immoral and violates Gods laws	34
Oppose the financial expense/debt to the state budget	21
Oppose retrieving stem cells from aborted fetuses	18
Stem cell research medical benefits are overblown or exaggerated	5
Believe that the possible economic benefits to NYS are overblown or exaggerated	3
Other Reason	17
Do not know	3

Lastly, Table 3 demonstrates how support for a proposition establishing an institute to fund and manage stem cell research in New York State varies across key demographic categories such as party affiliation, religious affiliation, age, annual household income, educational attainment, race, and gender.

Table 3 Public Support For State Funding of Stem Cell Research by Key Demographic Categories (%)

Demographic	Likely Support	Likely Oppose	Undecided
<i>Party Affiliation</i>			
Republicans	32	42	25
Democrats	53	19	27
Independents	46	23	29
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>			
Protestant	38	32	27
Catholic	42	24	32
Atheist/Agnostic/None	65	12	24
Other	56	23	19
<i>Age</i>			
18 – 35 years old	50	24	26
36 – 55 years old	45	24	30
56+ years old	41	33	23
<i>Household Income</i>			
\$35,000 or less	34	30	35
\$35,001 to \$75,000	47	23	27
\$75,001 or more	59	24	16
<i>Educational Attainment</i>			
High School or below	31	34	33
Some/Completed	49	23	27
Graduate/MD/PhD/JD	60	20	19
<i>Race</i>			
White	50	27	22
Non-white	35	25	38
<i>Gender</i>			
Men	49	25	30
Women	41	26	24

For More Information

If you are interested in directly accessing data from the Empire State Poll, have questions regarding the methodology, or wish to discuss other services provided by the ILR Survey Research Institute, please contact the SRI representative listed below or go to www.sri.cornell.edu.

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Citing Results from the ESP

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