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Texans for Stem Cell Research strongly supports Senators Kirk Watson and Judith Zaffirini in their efforts to remove rider 17.13 on Senate Bill 1, which would ban any state funding for embryonic stem cell research.

Austin, Texas, April 2, 2009 – Senators Kirk Watson and Judith Zaffirini questioned Senator Steve Ogden on the Senate floor today regarding his rider which would ban any state funding for embryonic stem cell research. Both not only requested the rider be removed from the bill, but were also disappointed in the underhanded process in which Ogden presented it and passed it out of the Finance Committee. We wholeheartedly support Senator Watson’s decision to vote against SB1 as long as this rider is in the bill. His leadership on this issue should be an example for all of his fellow legislators.

We also agree with Senator Watson’s comments that, “One partisan majority should never use something like the state budget as a cloak to hide the passage of partisan legislation. It corrupts the system. Power shifts and majorities come and go. But one truth should remain: “It’s wrong to pass the most important laws in ways that people are least likely to see”.

We could not agree more. This rider runs the risk of damaging the entire biotech sector and relegating Texas to a backwater state. Texas has always been a leader in promoting medical research. This rider ensures those days are in the past.

We also agree with Dr. Bernard Weinstein’s comment in his Houston Chronicle article (4/1/2009) that a greater irony is that “Governor Rick Perry has targeted the biosciences as a growth sector for the Texas economy” and Senator Ogden’s rider is diametrically opposed to that concept. While Senator Ogden says he will offer a clarifying rider, all Texans should be vigilant and hold him to his promise. Texans deserve transparency in the legislative process and should demand it from all of our leaders.

Notwithstanding Senator Ogden’s assurance that he would “clarify” the rider language, TSCR remains convinced that his efforts would be questionable at best.

We’d also like to commend Senators Davis, Shapleigh, Ellis, Watson and Gallegos for having the courage and conviction to vote against SB1 with a rider that would ban state funding for embryonic stem cell research.

Texans for Stem Cell Research is a non-profit organization incorporated in Texas that promotes *Hope and Quality of Life* by providing information and education to Texans about the benefits of stem cell research and treatment.

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