

Stem cell scientists mourn Frist's change

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U.S. stem cell researchers are bracing for renewed debate and hopeful their former advocate, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., will rejoin them.

In July 2001, Frist, a transplant surgeon, urged his fellow senators to buck conservative orthodoxy and support federally funded research on embryonic stem cells.

However, the next month President George Bush announced a more restrictive policy, limiting federal research to already existing embryonic stem cells, and Frist backed down.

Ever since, Frist has shied away from the issue entirely, the Washington Post said.

"We, as scientists, had great expectations for what he could do," said Mary Hendrix, president and scientific director of the Children's Memorial Research Center at Northwestern University.

She told the newspaper she is puzzled and disappointed by what "appears to be a change in Senator Frist's position," adding "I thought he was a staunch supporter."

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