

Dems try to gain from stem cell debate

April 24 2006

Democrats are making embryonic stem cell research an issue in House and Senate races from California to New Jersey.

The New York Times says Democrats want to exploit a division between conservatives who oppose the science and other Republicans more open to it.

"What Democrats want to do is gin up their turnout in the suburbs and divide Republicans, and right now they may do that," said Jennifer E. Duffy, who tracks Senate races for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report.

The Times said the division is most apparent in Missouri, where incumbent Republican senator Jim Talent is facing a tough re-election challenge from Democrat Claire McCaskill.

Talent has publicly wrestled with the stem cell issue and has avoided taking a stand on a proposed state constitutional amendment to protect stem cell research, the newspaper said.

Opponents of embryonic stem cell research view the studies as immoral because the cells are extracted from human embryos.

The Times said Christian conservatives are threatening not to vote unless Talent takes a stand on the amendment, while business-minded Republicans like Gov. Matt Blunt and former U.S. Sen. John C. Danforth back the initiative.

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