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FASEB VOICES STRONG SUPPORT FOR HARKIN-SPECTER PROVISION TO EXPAND EMBRYONIC STEM CELL POLICY

Bethesda, MD – The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) fully supports the Harkin-Specter provision on human embryonic stem cells (hESC) in the FY2008 Labor-HHS appropriations bill. “The leadership of Senators Harkin and Specter on this issue has been outstanding,” said FASEB President Leo T. Furcht, M.D. “Their efforts are providing hope to millions of Americans suffering from conditions like Parkinson’s disease, diabetes or spinal cord injury.”

The provision would expand the current federal funding policy for hESC research, making stem cell lines derived prior to June 15, 2007 eligible for funding providing they meet strict ethical requirements. “Researchers have been struggling to move science and medicine forward while coping with the current intolerable funding policy,” Furcht continued. “Embryonic stem cells are providing invaluable insight into the fundamental biology of disease, uncovering the pathway towards solutions to our most devastating ailments. To fully take advantage of the scientific potential of these extraordinary cells, scientists need access to more federally funded lines.”

Furcht cautioned that FASEB support of this provision does not diminish efforts to ultimately pass the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (S.5). “We are tremendously disappointed that President Bush has again dashed the hopes of patients and scientists through his second veto of this legislation,” he said. “The Harkin-Specter provision is an incremental and important step forward to facilitate scientific progress and keep hope alive. However, it is our strong belief that we need a more permanent solution: an embryonic stem cell funding policy that represents the best science and mandates ethical guidelines, as embodied by S.5. FASEB will continue to work with our champions in Congress and advocacy partners to achieve this goal.”

FASEB is composed of 21 societies with more than 80,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. FASEB enhances the ability of biomedical and life scientists to improve—through their research—the health, well-being and productivity of all people. FASEB’s mission is to advance biological science through collaborative advocacy for research policies that promote scientific progress and education and lead to improvements in human health.