

NEWS FROM CALIFORNIA STATE SENATOR

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6th Senate District

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HEALTH COMMITTEE APPROVES STEM CELL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES AUTHORED BY SENATORS ORTIZ AND RUNNER

SACRAMENTO – Two bipartisan bills by Senators Deborah Ortiz (D-Sacramento) and George Runner (R-Antelope) to hold California’s landmark stem cell research program accountable to the public were approved today by the Senate Health Committee.

Senate Bill 18 and Senate Constitutional Amendment 13 seek to ensure that women who donate eggs are provided with sufficient information about possible medical risks so that they can make informed choices and provide written consent before undergoing procedures to develop the eggs. The bills also would ensure that appointees and employees of the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) and the Independent Citizens’ Oversight Committee (ICOC), and their working groups, all established under Proposition 71, do not make funding decisions based on their financial interests, and that taxpayers receive a fair return on their \$3 billion to \$6 billion investment in stem cell research.

“These bills will ensure patients are protected and the research program is operated in a transparent manner to maintain the public’s confidence in this important research,” Ortiz said. “Because of the promise it hold for millions of Americans, this research must be held to the highest standards.”

“Californians did not write a blank check when they approved Proposition 71,” Runner said. “SB 18 and SCA 13 provide public accountability and ensure California will get a fair rate of return on its investment.”

Proposition 71, approved by voters in November 2004, prohibits the Legislature from enacting bills affecting the initiative for three years, and then only if the bills receive support of 70 percent of legislators in both houses. With the guidance of legal counsel, Ortiz and Runner crafted the legislation so that provisions in Senate Bill 18, which only requires a simple majority vote and approval by the governor, contain provisions that are not solely “in furtherance of” the initiative. To makes changes “supplemental to” Proposition 71, the senators are using the senate constitutional amendment, which requires a two-third vote of both houses of the Legislature in order to be placed before voters on the ballot.

A fact sheet on SB 18 and SCA 13 is attached.

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