

Committee approves stem cell bill

Bill will go before the House next week

BY TOM STUCKEY
Associated Press

Two House committees approved legislation Friday to provide \$25 million a year in state funds for stem cell research, with a high priority given to research on cells extracted from human embryos.

Approval by the House Health and Governmental Operations Committee and the Appropriations Committee was the first step in what is likely to be a protracted and contentious debate in the legislature over one of the most emotional issues of

the 2006 General Assembly session.

House Speaker Michael Busch, D-Anne Arundel, said the bill will be brought before the House for debate next week.

Funding for embryonic stem cell research is opposed by many lawmakers because embryos are destroyed when the stem cells are extracted. They want to limit state aid to research on stem cells that are taken from adults.

Bills also have been introduced in the state Senate, where opponents say they will mount a filibuster to prevent a vote if the issue comes out of committee.

Sen. Paula Hollinger, D-Baltimore County, chairwoman of one of the two committees that will consider the bill in the Senate, said leaders from the two houses have been working together and are taking similar approaches to funding stem cell research.

Gov. Robert Ehrlich has taken a different approach, setting aside \$20 million in next year's budget that could be used for research on either adult or embryonic cells. But the budget provides no guidance on how the money would be spent, leaving those decisions to be made by a state economic development commission.

Supporters of embryonic stem cell research say it holds the promise of finding cures for intractable diseases such as Parkinson's and diabetes and could lead to ways to regenerate nerves and restore movement to people paralyzed by spinal cord injuries.

President Bush has severely limited use of federal money for research on embryonic cells, and several states have stepped up to fill the gap with state research funds.

The bill approved by the committee prohibits human cloning. It

allows research to be done only on embryos no longer needed for fertility treatments that would otherwise be destroyed.

The bill was amended by the committee to allow use of the money for research on adult stem cells, but the priority remains on embryonic stem cell research, and the change did not mollify opponents on the committee.

The vote in the Health and Government Operations Committee was preceded by an emotional but restrained debate, with both sides acknowledging that stem cell research is a difficult issue.

"This has not been an easy decision for me," said Delegate Eric Bromwell, D-Baltimore County. But he said he had been urged to vote for the bill by people who are hoping for cures for their diseases.

"What made the decision for me is that I have the opportunity to pro-

vide hope," Bromwell said.

Delegate Marilyn Goldwater, D-Montgomery, told committee members she was diagnosed with blood cancer six years ago and, even though she was told she would probably die within two years, is living a normal life. Her hope is that stem cell research "will create something that will prolong my life," she told her colleagues.

Delegate Joseph Boteler, R-Baltimore County, said the state should be spending its money on adult stem cell research because it is helping cure diseases while embryonic stem cell research has not yielded any results.

"It may be that embryonic stem cells don't work out," Delegate Kumar Barve, D-Montgomery, responded. But he said the only way to find out is to give scientists the money they need to conduct their research.

Fraternities, sororities embrace black history

BY AURELIE FONTAINE
Special to The Examiner

Sporting their sorority's crimson and cream colors, a dozen Delta Sigma Theta women, or sorors, "stepped" down the aisle of the usually sedate Jurors Lounge at Moultrie Courthouse Friday — boogying, chanting, arms working and rhythmic feet stomping.

Onlookers cheered, shouted and broke into applause at the syncopated routine — a familiar sight on black college campuses where fraternities and sororities compete with one another at "step shows." The Deltas were one of seven black Greek organizations that performed.

It was all part of courthouse employees' celebration of black history month as well as a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the founding at Cornell University of Alpha Phi Alpha, the nation's first black fraternity.

U.S. District Court Judge Reggie Walton, who is an Alpha, said the black Greek organizations emphasized social, health and economic roles of its members and were an important part of black communities. His fraternity was founded initially to serve as a study and support group for minority stu-

SOME BLACK FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority


dents who faced racial prejudice, both educationally and socially.

"America is a great country but we have still a long way to go," said Walton, who said there was still a need for such support because "I see too many black male defendants in these courtrooms."

Garland Pinkston, clerk of the D.C. Court of Appeals and chairman of the celebration, said: "Being a member of fraternities and sororities is first an accomplishment. It is a part of your identity that you are proud of."

During the two-hour performance, members of the various black fraternities and sororities told of their histories and engaged in friendly rivalry and one-upmanship.

afontaine@dcexaminer.com



“We’ve got 12 grandkids. That means 12 birthdays.”

New Premium Money Market Offer
With \$10,000 In New Money
To Earn With A PNC Choice Plan®
Or Premium Plan®

4.25% APY+

You don't want to deny them anything. Make sure you don't have to. Our high-yield Money Market Account lets you save for what's important.

Generosity: Easy as PNC.™

PHONE 877-CALL-PNC
STOP BY ANY BRANCH
VISIT pnc.com

PNC BANK

THE WASHINGTON EXAMINER

The local paper with a bigger view of the world

©2006 The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. All Annual Percentage Yields (APYs) are accurate as of 2/19/06 and are subject to change. Initial deposit of \$10,000 or more in new money (funds not currently on deposit at PNC Bank or invested through PNC Investments) required. Account must be linked to a PNC Bank Choice Plan® or Premium Plan® checking account. For the first six statement periods after account opening, your account will earn a variable rate according to the following balance tiers: \$1,000-\$9,999.99 receives a variable rate, currently 1.00% APY (the Promotional Rate does not apply to this balance tier); \$10,000+ receives a variable rate, currently 4.25% APY, which is guaranteed to be greater than our standard, non-promotional rate for all tiers of our Premium Money Market Account. After the first six statement periods, your Premium Money Market will have our standard balance tiers of \$1,000-\$9,999.99; \$10,000-\$24,999.99; \$25,000-\$49,999.99; \$50,000-\$99,999.99; \$100,000.00+, and will earn our standard, non-promotional APY. Fees may reduce earnings. Member FDIC.