

Barack Obama Executive Order 13505, November 2008 ^[1]

By: Khokhar, Aroob Keywords: Stem cells ^[2] US Presidents ^[3]

On 20 November 2009 Democrat [Barack Obama](#) ^[5] replaced Republican [George W. Bush](#) ^[6] as president of the United States. Obama soon initiated changes to Bush's 2001 executive order concerning scientific research involving human [stem cells](#) ^[7]. Stem cell research remains a controversial issue in the US. Some individuals consider it immoral to experiment with an embryo because they regard embryos as human beings from the moment of [conception](#) ^[8], while others believe stem cell research could lead to great scientific advancements. Congress has not passed any legislation on stem cell research, leaving it open to the president to make policy through executive orders. On 9 March 2009, Obama signed Executive Order 13505 to expand experimentation on [stem cells](#) ^[7]. This overturned Executive Order 13435, which was signed by [George W. Bush](#) ^[6] to limit the potential research that could be done on [embryonic stem cells](#) ^[9].

In section 1, Obama lifted bans that Bush had previously placed on the [National Institutes of Health](#) ^[10] (NIH), prohibiting taxpayer money from being used to obtain [stem cells](#) ^[7] for research. Obama's executive order states that scientists should be able to receive federal funding to purchase and perform research on human [embryonic stem cells](#) ^[9] (hESC).

Although Obama gave scientists more freedom to experiment, he still set limits. In sections 2 and 3, the president appoints the Secretary of Health and Human Services along with the NIH director to set ethical guidelines for research. The guidelines, issued on 7 July 2009, state that only responsible, productive experiments with the potential to provide results valuable to humankind were to be performed. Experiments must in some way be geared towards improving health or preventing illness. The guidelines also aimed to clear up ethical issues on the topic of the source of [embryonic stem cells](#) ^[9]. Individuals donating [stem cells](#) ^[7] were to be fully informed about what would be done with the cells, have signed consent forms, and be able to withdraw their embryos at any time during the research. Stem cells could be obtained only from donors who willingly contribute them, or who sign over [stem cells](#) ^[7] from [in vitro](#) ^[11] [fertilization](#) ^[12] that will no longer be used for reproduction, and would be disposed of otherwise. The NIH was not to use federal funds in exchange for hESC from donors. Totipotent [stem cells](#) ^[7] were disallowed from research and only cells that were not to be used for reproductive purposes would be eligible for research. These [stem cells](#) ^[7] were ineligible for use because they still had the potential to be used for reproduction, crossing a perceived ethical line for research. The guidelines affecting policy and procedure were not permanent; they were to be checked often and could be edited at any time by the secretary and NIH if necessary.

Section 4 of the order contained general provisions for stem cell research and the common law. Research done should be appropriate, consistent, and law abiding. The executive order was not to be misinterpreted so that it could affect individuals with law-given authority such as executive departments and directors. Last, under no circumstances could anything having to do with the order be used by any party against the US, its departments, or individuals

associated with them.

The final section of the executive order revokes the former statement made by President Bush on 9 August 2001, which limited government funding provided to research done only on stem cell lines created prior to Bush's term. After completion of Executive Order 13505, order 13435 was withdrawn. On 9 March 2009, President Barack Obama signed the new order 13505 at the White House to be put into immediate effect.

Sources

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Subject

Obama, Barack ^[16] Stem Cells ^[17]

Topic

Legal ^[18]

Publisher

Arizona State University. School of Life Sciences. Center for Biology and Society. Embryo Project Encyclopedia.

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Format

Articles [19]

Last Modified

Wednesday, July 4, 2018 - 04:40

DC Date Accessioned

Thursday, May 10, 2012 - 14:06

DC Date Available

Thursday, May 10, 2012 - 14:06

DC Date Created

2010-06-17

DC Date Created Standard

Thursday, June 17, 2010 - 07:00

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Arizona 85287, United States

Source URL: <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/barack-obama-executive-order-13505-november-2008>

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