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**THE PRESIDENT'S VETO**

Washington DC

July 19, 2006

Joni Eareckson Tada was among those gathered at the White House in support of President George W. Bush as he vetoed a bill which would have expanded federal funding of research using human embryos from IVF clinics to harvest stem cells. Joining fellow disability advocates, ethicists, researchers, theologians and legislators Mrs. Tada, a spinal cord injured quadriplegic for nearly four decades observed, "I stand with countless Americans with disabilities who believe that our cause is not advanced when human life is sacrificed in hopes of finding a cure. People like me -- who are medically fragile -- are left vulnerable and exposed in a society that views human life as a commodity which can be experimented upon or exploited. Any research that destroys human embryos is an affront to God's creative authority."

The disability community has another vested interest in the Presidential veto -- despite lack of reporting by the media, people with disabilities can be encouraged by recent and dramatic advancements in adult stem cell research. During the course of a long bioethics debate over embryonic stem cells, science has out-run politics. Adult cells may be more elastic than scientists previously thought and are offering short-cuts to treatment which embryonic cells cannot match. Over 70 medical conditions are either being treated using adult stem cell therapies or are presently in clinical trials.

Long an advocate of adult stem cell research, Joni stated after the White House ceremony, "I am grateful for the principled stand our President has taken, first and foremost because of the sanctity of human life, but also because restrictions on use of tax-

payer dollars may well encourage funding in the overlooked and less commercially-viable field of adult stem cell therapy.”

Dramatic advancements in spinal cord injury therapies have recently been documented as paralyzed patients are taking part in clinical trials and therapies using their own stem cells. Currently the National Center for Regenerative Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio has 10 on-going or planned clinic trials to further explore the use of stem cell therapies not only for spinal cord injury, but to treat certain heart conditions.

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