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FAX TRANSMITTAL SHEET

DATE: 3/4/97

TO:

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FAX NUMBER:

66218

PHONE NUMBER:

FROM:

Rebecca Dittmar

NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER SHEET): [7]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Press materials re: cloning

file
Cloning

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 4, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON CLONING

The Oval Office

9:25 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. I'm glad to be joined this morning by the Vice President, Secretary Shalala, Dr. Harold Varmus, the head of NIH; Dr. Harold Shapiro, the President of Princeton and the Chairman of our Bioethics Advisory Commission; and Dr. Jack Gibbons, the President's Advisor on Science and Technology, all of whom know a lot about and care a lot about this issue we are discussing today.

The recent breakthrough in animal cloning is one that could yield enormous benefits, enabling us to reproduce the most productive strains of crop and livestock, holding out the promise of revolutionary new medical treatments and cures, helping to unlock the greatest secrets of the genetic code. But like the splitting of the atom, this is a discovery that carries burdens as well as benefits.

Science often moves faster than our ability to understand its implications. That is why we have a responsibility to move with caution and care to harness the powerful forces of science and technology so that we can reap the benefit while minimizing the potential danger.

This new discovery raises the troubling prospect that it might someday be possible to clone human beings from our own genetic material. There is much about cloning that we still do not know. But this much we do know: any discovery that touches upon human creation is not simply a matter of scientific inquiry, it is a matter of morality and spirituality as well.

My own view is that human cloning would have to raise deep concerns, given our most cherished concepts of faith and humanity. Each human life is unique, born of a miracle that reaches beyond laboratory science. I believe we must respect this profound gift and resist the temptation to replicate ourselves.

At the very least, however, we should all agree that we need a better understanding of the scope and implications of this most recent breakthrough. Last week, I asked our National Bioethics Advisory Commission, headed by President Harold Shapiro of Princeton, to conduct a thorough review of the legal and the ethical issues raised by this new cloning discovery, and to recommend possible actions to prevent its abuse, reporting back to me by the end of May.

In the meantime, I am taking further steps to prevent human cloning. The federal government currently restricts the use of federal funds for research involving human embryos. After

reviewing these restrictions, our administration believes that there are loopholes that could allow the cloning of human beings if the technology were developed. Therefore, today I am issuing a directive that bans the use of any federal funds for any cloning of human beings.

Effective immediately, no federal agency may support, fund, or undertake such activity. Of course, a great deal of research and activity in this area is supported by private funds. That is why I am urging the entire scientific and medical community, every foundation, every university, every industry that supports work in this area to heed the federal government's example. I'm asking for a voluntary moratorium on the cloning of human beings until our Bioethics Advisory Commission and our entire nation have had a real chance to understand and debate the profound ethical implications of the latest advances.

As we gain a fuller understanding of this technology, we must proceed not just with caution, but also with a conscience, by insisting that not a single taxpayer dollar supports human cloning. And by urging a moratorium on all private research in this area, we can ensure that as we move forward on this issue, we weigh the concerns of faith and family and philosophy and values, not merely of science alone. Thank you very much.

**note - this is an excerpt from President Clinton's press conference, 4 March 1997*

**Ban on Federal Funding of Human Cloning and
Voluntary Moratorium on Human Cloning Research
March 4, 1997**

Announcement

President Clinton today issued a directive to ensure that no federal funds will be used to clone human beings. The current restrictions do not explicitly cover human embryos created by cloning for implantation and do not cover all federal agencies.

President Clinton called on privately-funded scientists to implement a voluntary moratorium on all efforts to undertake human cloning until the National Bioethics Advisory Commission -- and the entire nation -- have considered its profound ethical implications. Since privately-funded scientists are not covered by the President's directive, a voluntary moratorium would ensure that ethical issues are fully debated before there are any efforts to clone human beings.

Background

- o **The February 27 issue of Nature contains an account of the first successful cloning of an adult sheep. The new technology could lead to major advances in science, agriculture, and medicine. For example, it may inform new methods for producing human proteins, creating model organism to study human diseases, and possibly reprogramming human cells for treatment of cancer, burns, and other disorders. But the new technology also raises profound ethical issues, particularly with respect to its possible use to clone human beings.**
- o **On February 24 President Clinton asked the National Bioethics Advisory Commission (NBAC) to review the legal and ethical issues involved and to report back within 90 days on possible federal actions.**
- o **The President does not believe federal funds should be used for human cloning, and current restrictions on federal funds do not fully assure that result. In December, 1994 the President directed the National Institutes of Health not to fund the creation of human embryos for research purposes. Congress extended this prohibition in 1996 and 1997 appropriations bills, barring the Department of Health and Human Services from supporting certain human embryo research. These restrictions do not explicitly cover human embryos created for implantation and do not cover all federal agencies.**
- o **Privately-funded scientists and clinicians are not prohibited from cloning human beings. Although most scientists believe that the possibility of cloning human beings in the near future is remote, President Clinton believes that a voluntary moratorium should be in place while the national debate on human cloning takes place.**

List of Participants

The President

The Vice President

Secretary Donna Shalala

Dr. Harold Varmus, Director of the National Institute of Health

Dr. Harold Shapiro, President of Princeton University/ Chair, National Bioethics Advisory
Commission

Dr. Jack Gibbons, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 24, 1997

Dr. Harold Shapiro
Chair
National Bioethics
Advisory Commission
Suite 3C01
6100 Executive Boulevard
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-7508

Dear Dr. Shapiro:

As you know, it was reported today that researchers have developed techniques to clone sheep. This represents a remarkable scientific discovery, but one that raises important questions. While this technological advance could offer potential benefits in such areas as medical research and agriculture, it also raises serious ethical questions, particularly with respect to the possible use of this technology to clone human embryos.

Therefore, I request that the National Bioethics Advisory Commission undertake a thorough review of the legal and ethical issues associated with the use of this technology, and report back to me within ninety days with recommendations on possible federal actions to prevent its abuse.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 4, 1997

March 4, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Prohibition on Federal Funding
for Cloning of Human Beings

Recent accounts of advances in cloning technology, including the first successful cloning of an adult sheep, raise important questions. They potentially represent enormous scientific breakthroughs that could offer benefits in such areas as medicine and agriculture. But the new technology also raises profound ethical issues, particularly with respect to its possible use to clone humans. That is why last week I asked our National Bioethics Advisory Commission to thoroughly review the legal and ethical issues associated with the use of this technology and report back to me in 90 days.

Federal funds should not be used for cloning of human beings. The current restrictions on the use of Federal funds for research involving human embryos do not fully assure this result. In December 1994, I directed the National Institutes of Health not to fund the creation of human embryos for research purposes. The Congress extended this prohibition in FY 1996 and FY 1997 appropriations bills, barring the Department of Health and Human Services from supporting certain human embryo research. However, these restrictions do not explicitly cover human embryos created for implantation and do not cover all Federal agencies. I want to make it absolutely clear that no Federal funds will be used for human cloning. Therefore, I hereby direct that no Federal funds shall be allocated for cloning of human beings.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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