To date, two bills that would criminalize all forms of cloning have passed the House, but failed to pass the Senate. See H.R. 2505, 107th Cong. (passed in 2001 by a vote of 265-162) and H.R. 534, 108th Cong. (passed in 2003 by a vote of 241-155). Political analysts explain the result by surmising that a majority of senators favor stem cell research, including research using cloned embryos, and thus oppose a law which would shut down research in this area. In March 2005, Senator Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) introduced another version of previous bills that criminalize all forms of human cloning, including therapeutic cloning designed to create immune-compatible medical products. Senate Bill 658, introduced on March 17, 2005, provides in relevant part:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2005.”

SECTION 2. PROHIBITION ON HUMAN CLONING . . .

(a) Definitions — In this section:

(1) HUMAN CLONING — The term “human cloning” means human asexual reproduction, accomplished by introducing nuclear material from one or more human somatic cells into a fertilized or unfertilized oocyte whose nuclear material has been removed or inactivated so as to produce a living organism (at any stage of development) that is genetically virtually identical to an existing or previously existing human organism.

(2) ASEXUAL REPRODUCTION — The term “asexual reproduction” means reproduction not initiated by the union of oocyte and sperm.
(3) SOMATIC CELL — The term "somatic cell" means a diploid cell (having a complete set of chromosomes) obtained or derived from a living or deceased human body at any stage of development.

(b) Prohibition — It shall be unlawful for any person or entity, public or private, in or affecting interstate commerce, knowingly —

(1) to perform or attempt to perform human cloning;

(2) to participate in an attempt to perform human cloning; or

(3) to ship or receive for any purpose an embryo produced by human cloning or any product derived from such embryo.

(c) Importation — It shall be unlawful for any person or entity, public or private, knowingly to import for any purpose an embryo produced by human cloning.

(d) Penalties —

(1) CRIMINAL PENALTY — Any person or entity that violates this section shall be fined or imprisoned for not more than 10 years, or both.

(2) CIVIL PENALTY — Any person or entity that violates any provision of this section shall be subject to, in the case of a violation that involves the derivation of a pecuniary gain, a civil penalty of not less than $1,000,000 and not more than an amount equal to the amount of the gross gain multiplied by 2, if that amount is greater than $1,000,000.

(e) Scientific Research — Nothing in this section restricts areas of scientific research not specifically prohibited by this section, including research in the use of nuclear transfer or other cloning techniques to produce molecules, DNA, cells other than human embryos, tissues, organs, plants, or animals other than humans.

Do you support this bill? If so, do you believe it will have any impact on research in the field of cell-based regenerative medicine? If not, is it because you favor both reproductive and therapeutic cloning, or just the latter? If polls are accurate in their results that most Americans oppose reproductive cloning but favor therapeutic cloning, why would lawmakers tie the two techniques together in a single "all or nothing" bill?

Shortly after S. 658 was introduced, on April 21, 2005 another group of Senators introduced a countermeasure in the form of Senate Bill 876, entitled the "Human Cloning Ban and Stem Cell Research Protection Act of 2005." The bill prohibits human reproductive cloning but also authorizes embryonic stem cell research. Relevant portions of the bill provide as follows:
SECTION 301. Prohibition on Human Cloning.

(a) Definitions — In this section:

(1) HUMAN CLONING — The term “Human cloning” means implanting or attempting to implant the product of nuclear transplantation into a uterus or the functional equivalent of a uterus.

(b) Prohibitions on Human Cloning — It shall be unlawful for any person or other legal entity, public or private —

(1) to conduct or attempt to conduct human cloning.

SECTION 499A. Ethical Requirements for Nuclear Transplantation Research.

(c) Prohibition on Conducting Nuclear Transplantation on Fertilized Eggs — A somatic cell nucleus shall not be transplanted into a human oocyte that has undergone or will undergo fertilization.

Do you think S. 658 permits or prohibits therapeutic cloning?