

MARCH 1, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MISSTATEMENT OF THE DAY -
SCIENCE AND RESEARCH**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued today's "Bush Administration's Misstatement of the Day" on science and research.□□

In a nationally televised speech on stem cell research on August 9, 2001, President Bush announced that he would *"name a President's council to monitor stem cell research, to recommend appropriate guidelines and regulations, and to consider all of the medical and ethical ramifications of biomedical innovation. This council will keep us apprised of new developments and give our nation a forum to continue to discuss and evaluate these important issues."* (Emphasis added)

The *Washington Post*, however, reported on Saturday, February 28, 2004: President Bush yesterday dismissed two members of his handpicked Council on Bioethics -- a scientist and a moral philosopher who had been among the more outspoken advocates for research on human embryo cells.□

In their places he appointed three new members, including a doctor who has called for more religion in public life, a political scientist who has spoken out precisely against the research that the dismissed members supported, and another who has written about the immorality of abortion and the "threats of biotechnology." Schakowsky said, "President Bush only wants appointees who agree with his views.□ It's obvious President Bush misled the American people when he announced he was creating a Bioethics Council that would

'consider all of the medical and ethical ramifications of biomedical innovation.'

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([See Related February 23, 2004 Misstatement](#))

The Washington Post
February 28, 2004

Bush Ejects Two From Bioethics Council;□

Changes Renew Criticism That the President Puts Politics Ahead of Science

BYLINE: Rick Weiss, Wash

President Bush yesterday dismissed two members of his handpicked Council on Bioethics -- a scientist and a moral philosopher who had been among the more outspoken advocates for research on human embryo cells.□

In their places he appointed three new members, including a doctor who has called for more religion in public life, a political scientist who has spoken out precisely against the research that the dismissed members supported, and another who has written about the immorality of abortion and the "threats of biotechnology."□

The turnover immediately renewed a recent string of accusations by scientists and others that Bush is increasingly allowing politics to trump science as he seeks advice on ethically contentious issues.□

Last week, a Washington-based interest group released a report detailing what it called many examples of the administration distorting the scientific process to achieve desired policy answers relating to pollution, embryo research and other topics. Some in Congress, led by Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), have also been getting vocal on the topic, as have academics, scientific organizations and science journal editors.□

One of the dismissed members, Elizabeth Blackburn, is a renowned biologist at the University of California at San Francisco. She said she received a call yesterday morning from someone in the White House personnel office.□

"He said the White House had decided to make some changes on the council. He wanted to express his gratitude and said I'd no longer be on the council," Blackburn said.□

She said she had no warning and had not heard from the council's director, University of Chicago ethicist Leon Kass. She said she believed she was let go because her political views do not match those of the president and of Kass, with whom she has often been at odds at council meetings.□

"I think this is Bush stacking the council with the compliant," Blackburn said.□

The other dismissed member, William May, an emeritus professor of ethics at Southern Methodist University, is a highly respected scholar whose views on embryo research and other topics had also run counter to those of conservative council members. Efforts to reach him last night were unsuccessful.□

Asked why Blackburn and May had been let go, White House spokeswoman Erin Healy said the two members' terms had expired in January, and they were on "holdover status." Asked whether, in fact, all the council members' terms had formally expired in January, she said they had.□

Pressed on why Blackburn and May had been singled out for dismissal, she said: "We've decided to go ahead and appoint other individuals with different expertise and experience." She would not elaborate further.□

Kass, who has written prolifically about biotechnology's toll on human dignity and was selected by Bush to head the council, was traveling yesterday and could not be reached.□

Bush created the council by executive order in 2001 to "advise the President on bioethical issues that may emerge as a consequence of advances in biomedical science and technology." He recently renewed its commission for another two years.□

The group of scholars, scientists, theologians and others has produced several reports, including ones on human cloning, stem cell research and the use of biotechnology to enhance human beings. But the council has often found it difficult to reach consensus on issues.□

The three new appointees are Benjamin Carson, the high-profile director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University; Diana Schaub, chairman of the department of political science at Loyola College in Maryland; and Peter Lawler, a professor of government at Berry College in Georgia. All are respected members of their fields. And their writings suggest their tenures will be less contentious than their predecessors'.□

When not performing some of the most difficult surgeries in the world, Carson is a motivational speaker who often invokes religion and the Bible and has lamented that "we live in a nation where we can't talk about God in public."□

Schaub has effusively praised Kass and his work. In a 2002 public forum discussing the council's cloning report, she talked about research in which embryos are destroyed as "the evil of the willful destruction of innocent human life."□

In a book review in the conservative Weekly Standard in late 2002, Lawler warned that if the United States does not soon "become clear as a nation that abortion is wrong," then women will eventually be compelled to abort genetically defective babies.□

Michael Gazzaniga, a Dartmouth neuroscientist who sits on the council, said he was "upset" by Blackburn's ejection.□

"She was one of the basic scientists who understood the biology of many of the issues we're talking about," Gazzaniga said. "It will be a loss for sure."□

Research editor Margot Williams contributed to this report.