



March 12, 2008

VOTER ALERT: MN “DNA Warehouse” Bill Pending

The Minnesota Department of Health wants to own the DNA of every citizen, starting at birth, for the purpose of doing genetic research on individual citizens without consent. (*SF 3138/H.F 3438*)

Already, the DNA of **780,000** children is illegally owned and controlled by Minnesota government in a State DNA warehouse. Already, the genetic information of more than **41,000 children** has been used for genetic research inside and outside of the Minnesota Department of Health...without parent knowledge or consent...or legal authority.

The Minnesota Department of Health began saving newborn blood and DNA in July 1997 by executive decision—without legislative authority. They later began sharing it with researchers.

In March 2007, an administrative law judge ruled that, in compliance with the state genetic privacy law, explicit informed parent consent was required prior to saving the DNA or sharing it with researchers. The Health Department said no.

Instead, state Health Department officials are now asking Minnesota legislators to exempt the DNA warehousing and research activities from the Minnesota Genetic Privacy Law (M.S. 13.386). If the Department’s DNA warehouse & research bill becomes law, State officials will be empowered to continue keeping the DNA of infants (eventually voting adults) without consent.

On Tuesday, March 11, 2008, Senator Warren Limmer (R-Maple Grove) attempted to add informed parent consent requirements to the Department’s Senate bill, but the Senate Judiciary Committee voted against consent rights, essentially voting against citizen DNA property rights.

"Yes, the Governor is in support of this bill," testified Mark McCann from the Minnesota Department of Health, in response to Sen. Limmer's inquiry. Mr. McCann opposed Sen. Limmer's amendment to the bill. The author, Sen. Ann Lynch, says the DNA warehouse extends beyond the needs of the infant to the broader health care reform issues of “prevention and cost containment.”

The Senate bill is scheduled to soon go to the floor of the Senate for a vote. Every Senator will be required to vote on the bill. Thus far, there are no consent requirements for DNA warehousing or genetic research in the bill.

CONTACT INFO:

SENATE BILL: S.F. 3138 (Author: Sen. Ann Lynch (D-Rochester))

Governor Tim Pawlenty: 651-296-3391 (1-800-657-3717); tim.pawlenty@state.mn.us

Your Senator: 651-296-0504 (toll free 1-888-234-1112); www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/

HOUSE BILL:

The House bill (HF 3438) is authored by Rep. Paul Thissen (D-Mpls). Next hearing Thursday, March 13, 2008 before the HHS Comm. at 2:15 p.m., Room 200 State Office Building. To testify email the HHS Committee Administrator: jen.mcnertney@house.mn

To Contact HHS Committee Members: House Info: 651-296-2146 or

<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/committeemembers.asp?comm=11000>