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Memorial Sloan Kettering President Harold Varmus (center, in blue shirt) joined Cabinet members, members of Congress, and other stem cell research advocates to witness President Barack Obama signing an Executive Order lifting the government's ban on federal funding for stem cell research at a White House ceremony on March 9.

Memorial Sloan Kettering President Harold Varmus, Co-Chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, joined lawmakers, scientists, and patients on March 9 at a White House ceremony as President Barack Obama issued an executive order lifting the Bush administration's strict limits on human embryonic stem cell research. President Obama paired the order with a memorandum directing the heads of all executive departments and agencies to neither suppress nor alter scientific and technological findings solicited in the process of policy formulation. He also asked that scientific information

developed or used by the government be made readily available to the public.

“This [Stem Cell] Order is an important step in advancing the cause of science in America,” Mr. Obama said. “But let’s be clear: Promoting science isn’t just about providing resources — it is also about protecting free and open inquiry ... free from manipulation or coercion, and listening to what [scientists] tell us, even when it’s inconvenient.”

In an editorial in the March 20 issue of *Science* titled “The Enlightenment Returns,” Dr. Varmus and Kurt Gottfried, professor emeritus of physics at Cornell University and co-founder of the Union of Concerned Scientists, observed that “the first announcement, which dealt decisively with a single important and politically volatile issue, the funding of stem cell research, received the most attention. But the second, on scientific integrity, has greater breadth and at least equal significance... . In using the words ‘manipulation’ and ‘coercion,’ the president was not speaking purely in the abstract; he was alluding to recent breaches of a code to which government must adhere if science is to play its proper role in advising the government on such complex issues as public health, climate change, or environmental protection. When the government systematically disregards this code, it undermines the historic role of science as a bulwark of an enlightened democracy.”

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