

Briefly noted

News in the [January 27, 2004](#) issue

New Jersey has become the second state to allow embryonic stem cell research after its governor signed a law that has drawn criticism from religious and ethical groups that oppose abortion. “It is our obligation as a people and as a state to move the frontiers of science forward,” said Gov. James E. McGreevey when he signed the law January 4. Embryonic stem cell research has been strongly opposed by the Catholic Church and anti-abortion groups because it involves the use of fetal and embryonic tissue. It is permitted in California, and bills are pending regarding it in New York and Illinois.

The Anglican Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo said it will “disassociate itself from relations” with the Episcopal Church because of its decision to consecrate an openly gay bishop, V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire. The Congo church is the tenth church in the Anglican Communion to take such action. The church, with 300,000 members, also rebuked the Anglican bishop of New Westminster (Vancouver), Canada, for his decision to formally allow the blessing of same-sex unions, as well as “the access to priesthood of actively gay and lesbian people.”

The small Sikh community of France is asking for help from India’s Hindu prime minister to have its traditional turbans exempted from a proposed French law to ban religious symbols such as Muslim head scarves from schools. Chain Singh, spokesman for about 5,000 Sikhs in Paris, told Reuters he was contacting Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chief Minister Amerinder Singh of Punjab state—the home of Sikhism—to request that they encourage Paris to exempt turbans. “We cannot live without our turbans. This is our religion. If we cannot wear them, we may not be able to stay here.” Sikh men use their turbans to cover their hair, which is never cut. President Jacques Chirac called in December for a French ban on “conspicuous” religious symbols in public schools.