

James Harrison to Step Down as Stem Cell Agency General Counsel

Posted: March 17, 2017

March 17, 2017

Oakland, CA – Today, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) announced that James Harrison will step down as General Counsel, effective June 30th, to focus full-time on his legal practice.

James, a partner at Remcho Johansen & Purcell LLP, was one of the lawyers who assisted in researching and drafting Proposition 71 ("Prop 71"), the ballot initiative passed by California voters in November 2004, that created CIRM.

James has represented CIRM since the agency's inception as counsel to the Governing Board and later as its General Counsel. In both capacities, he has been a key advisor in the stem cell agency's operations, working with the Chairman, the Governing Board, and the entire CIRM team in defending the agency in litigation, drafting and reviewing agency policies, advising the agency on conflict of interest issues, and interfacing with constitutional officers and legislators on matters ranging from financing to proposed legislation.

"James has been a key driver of CIRM's efforts from the very beginning," says Jonathan Thomas, Ph.D., J.D., Chair of the CIRM Board. "He has throughout provided the highest level counsel and guidance across a wide range of issues and has at all times had the greatest respect of the Board and the CIRM Team. He will be sorely missed."

"James is more than wise counsel at CIRM, he has also been a highly effective leader, responsible for designing and implementing many of CIRM 2.0's more innovative features," says C. Randal Mills, Ph.D., President and CEO of CIRM. "He is unflappable and maintains a sense of humor and perspective, even in the most challenging of situations. We thank him for his many years of service and wish him the very best."

Dr. Mills has asked Scott Tocher, CIRM's Deputy General Counsel, to work closely with James to ensure continuity during the transition.

Scott started with the agency in 2005. He was instrumental in drafting CIRM's initial IP laws and continues to be the lead in updating the evolving policy, working with the Office of Administrative Law to ensure state compliance. During his tenure at CIRM, Scott has touched nearly every aspect of the legal work involved with such a complex organization.

"We are fortunate to have someone with Scott's background and institutional knowledge during this transition," says Dr. Mills. "Replacing someone like James is not easy, but with Scott's leadership the work of the Agency will continue in a seamless manner."

About CIRM

At CIRM, we never forget that we were created by the people of California to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, and act with a sense of urgency to succeed in that mission.

To meet this challenge, our team of highly trained and experienced professionals actively partners with both academia and industry in a hands-on, entrepreneurial environment to fast track the development of today's most promising stem cell technologies.

With \$3 billion in funding and approximately 300 active stem cell programs in our portfolio, CIRM is the world's largest institution dedicated to helping people by bringing the future of cellular medicine closer to reality.

For more information, go to www.cirm.ca.gov