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Obama and a Conservative, Pro-Life Case for Embryonic Stem Cell Research

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Immediately after the election, top Obama aides indicated that one of the new president's first actions would be to sign an executive order reversing the Bush administration's ban on embryonic stem cell research. President Obama signed a slew of executive orders his first few days in office, but he has yet to deliver on this one. Advocates for those suffering from Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, spinal cord injuries, and diabetes are starting to get nervous.

I'm often asked as a mother of a child with type 1 diabetes who would benefit from a cure found through stem cell research—but also as a pro-life conservative—what my position is on stem cell research.

I think there's a good case for pro-life conservatives to support embryonic stem cell research.

I am opposed to creating embryos simply to destroy them for the sake of stem cell research. But we don't need to do that when there are so many discarded embryos in fertility clinics across the United States. One of the reasons Nadya Suleman, the mother of the octuplets, is such a curiosity is because she got a slew of eggs fertilized and didn't discard any of them—she had them all implanted. Her own mother told the *Los Angeles Times*: "Look what happened. Octuplets. Dear God."

Like her procedure, many in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedures involve the fertilization of multiple eggs. But unlike Ms. Suleman, most couples save the extras, sometimes freezing them for future use. Once the couple decides how many children they'd like to have, the excess fertilized eggs (now embryos) are discarded. The couples I know who have gone through IVF are wonderful, well-intentioned people who are thrilled to be bringing another life into the world. Unfortunately, there is this issue they have to deal with regarding the number of embryos, and it's difficult for everyone.

In a perfect world, doctors would not fertilize more than one egg at a time, so there wouldn't be any extra embryos discarded in the first place. But that horse is out of the barn. As long as there are excess embryos as a result of IVF—ones that otherwise will be discarded—let's have something good come of them. Let's see if they hold the key to curing the suffering of others, rather than just throwing them away. Let's make a positive statement about the worth of each embryo, even the discarded ones.

If you ask me, one of the most pro-life things you can do (other than adopting a child) is to donate blood and sign up to be an organ donor. So if you're opposed to embryonic stem cell research, think of it this way: If my friend gets killed in a car crash, one of the best outcomes from that tragedy would be if he or she had signed up to be an organ donor.

It doesn't mean I'm glad my friend died. It doesn't mean I'm in favor of car crashes.

It doesn't mean that more people should die on our highways so we can have more organ donations.

It's just a way for some good to come out of a bad situation. An otherwise awful situation can be turned into a way to save a life.

Same with stem cells. Until we stop fertilizing more than one egg at a time, why not have a some good come from discarded embryos? It's the most pro-life choice one can make in an otherwise tragic situation. President Obama could reassure the 100 million Americans who suffer from cancer, diabetes, diseases of the brain and spinal cord—Americans who could be cured by stem cell research—that he values every embryo and that he wants to turn a horrible situation into an opportunity to alleviate suffering. For their sake, let's hope he signs that executive order soon.