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### Obama pays tribute to Reeve's spirit, work

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President Barack Obama yesterday honored the work and spirit of late actor Christopher Reeve, who became a tireless advocate for embryonic stem cell research after he was paralyzed in a horseback riding accident.

In lifting the ban on federal funds for stem cell research, Obama said the nation owes a debt of gratitude to people like Reeve who "organized, and raised awareness, and kept on fighting - even when it was too late for them, or for the people they love."

Reeve, of "Superman" fame, and his wife, Dana, created a foundation dedicated to finding a cure for spinal cord injuries.

The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation hailed Obama's decision.

"With a stroke of his pen, President Obama acknowledged the will of the majority of Americans and harnessed the power of the federal government to move research forward," the group said in a statement. "By removing politics from science, President Obama has freed researchers to explore these remarkable stem cells, learn from them and possibly develop effective therapies using them."

Reeve, who was paralyzed in a 1995 horseback riding accident, became an outspoken champion of cutting-edge research to find a cure for spinal injuries and neurological ailments. He believed that with enough money devoted to research, spinal cord repair could become reality. He even appeared in a 2000 TV commercial for Nuveen Investments, aired during the Super Bowl, in which he appeared to walk as a way to motivate others to donate to the cause.

Reeve died of heart failure in 2004, and Dana died of lung cancer in 2006.

Obama recounted Christopher Reeve's fighting spirit, efforts to regain the ability to walk and upbeat outlook. The president said he wished Reeve and his wife "could be here to see this moment."

"One of Christopher's friends recalled that he hung a sign on the wall of the exercise room where he did his grueling regimen of physical therapy," Obama said. "It read: For everyone who thought I couldn't do it. For everyone who thought I shouldn't do it. For everyone who said, 'It's impossible.' See you at the finish line."

"Christopher did not get that chance. But if we pursue this research, maybe one day - maybe not in our lifetime, or even in our children's lifetime - but maybe one day, others like him might," Obama said.

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