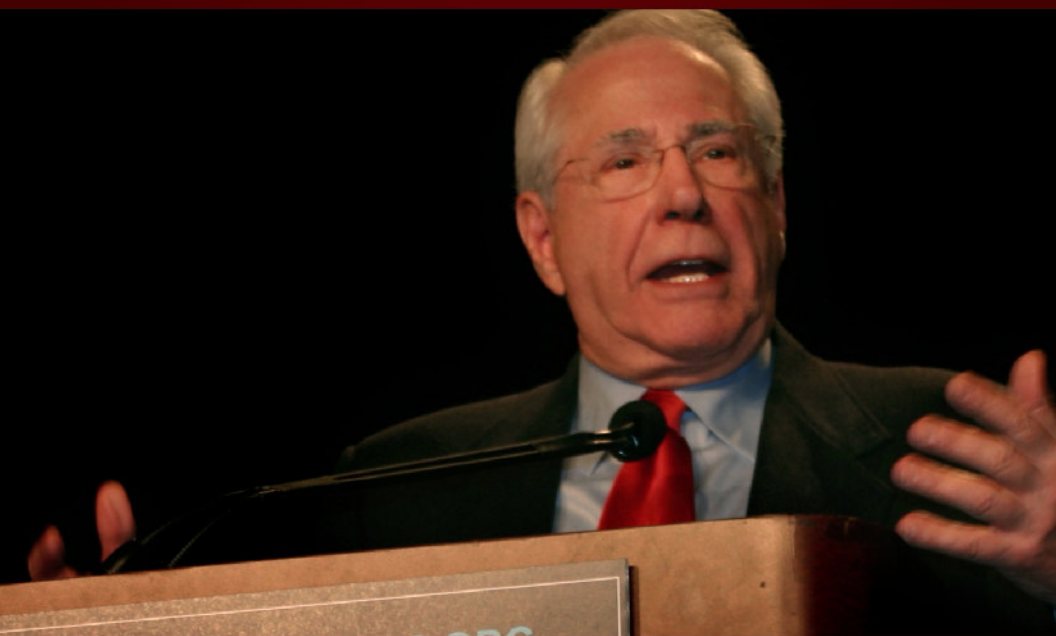


VOICE — OF A — MAVERICK



**The Speeches and Writings
of Senator Mike Gravel**

Foreword by Lynne Gravel

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SENATOR MIKE GRAVEL

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“As a nation, we must put aside our arrogance and demand that our leaders work together with other nations and peoples, treating them as equals.” Above, Senator Gravel’s wife, Whitney, his dog, Ginger, and Senator Gravel.

About Mike Gravel

Mike Gravel is a former two term U.S. Senator from Alaska with a distinguished record that includes ending the military draft in 1971 with a five-month filibuster. He also exposed the Pentagon's secret war in Vietnam by releasing *The Pentagon Papers*, risking both prosecution and jail. He played the leading role in making the Alaska pipeline a reality and ended nuclear weapons testing in the seabed off the coast of Alaska. For the past two decades, he has been the driving force behind the National Initiative for Democracy, a proposal to allow Americans to participate in making laws at the federal level through a federal ballot initiative process—already proven in many states as an effective and necessary check on unresponsive representative government. On April 17, 2006, Senator Gravel announced he would run for president. This book documents many of the speeches and writings he has penned over the course of his campaign.

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Gravel Makes His Run For the White House

On April 17, 2006, Senator Gravel announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for the president of the United States. He was the first of what would eventually be eight Democratic contenders. The following is the announcement speech he made at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on that day.

We have a great country. We can do better. We must embrace our Founders' intentions that we evolve our democracy to remain true to its founding principles. Lincoln, 140 years ago, defined our government: "of the People, by the People, and for the People." It falls to us to now give full meaning to a Government "by the People" so our common wisdom is reflected in our national policies. Today's advances in information and communication technology provide us unprecedented ability to communicate as citizens, and all that is lacking is a political process, a mechanism, that permits the citizens to play a direct role in the operations of government.

Our country needs a renewal—renewal not just of particular policies, or of particular people, but of democracy itself. I believe that the remedy for the state of our political alienation is the civic renewal embodied in the "National Initiative for Democracy." The National

Initiative is proposed legislation that colleagues and I have developed over the last 15 years. The National Initiative—when enacted into law—will bring all American citizens into the operations of government as lawmakers.

Our three branches of government have become like an unstable chair with only three legs. The Founders could not have envisioned how much money and special interests would corrupt our political process. Giving us—American citizens—legislative power will put the fourth leg on our chair, giving birth to a new foundation of American governance—adding a new check to our system of checks and balances. I believe the Internet adage: “all of us together are smarter than any one of us alone.” I say: “Let the people decide.”

Lawmaking is the central power of government not Election Day voting. Politicians have purposely made the electoral process uncompetitive and jealously guard their monopoly on lawmaking. Whoever makes the laws determines who we vote for, when we vote, and how we vote—Florida and Ohio are recent examples.

Representative government is mired in a culture of lies and corruption. The corrupting influence of money has created a class of professional politicians raising huge sums to maintain power. Then politicians legislate in the interests of corporations and interest groups.

Are today’s political leaders more corrupt than earlier generations? I do not think so. Most men and women in public service begin with a dedication to the public good. It’s the power that corrupts them. Throwing the rascals out—Republicans or Democrats or any party for that matter—may make us feel good but reshuffling the deck won’t make any difference. We hope against hope that our representatives will correct and reform government. But it’s like asking the foxes to redesign the chicken coop.

The flaws of representative government aren’t in the structure of representative government or with those who manage it. It’s both. It’s the structure of representative government that makes its managers susceptible to corruption, greed, injustice and self-serving interests.

As an elected official for 16 years of my life, I fought within the system on issues I felt deeply about, and to some degree I felt the pressures of the system. The voters will evaluate my record and pass judgment on the totality of my public service. When I left office a generation ago I was disgusted with government and politics. I withdrew entirely from the public arena for a decade.

Over the last 15 years with the help of committed colleagues, much study, and trial and error, we were able to codify a concept and methodology that could make citizens deliberative lawmakers in every government jurisdiction of the United States. My campaign will focus public attention on legislation—the National Initiative—that will empower American citizens. We have designed a voting procedure for citizens to enact the National Initiative. It's the only way people will ever be empowered.

Equipping Americans with deliberative lawmaking tools will unleash civic creativity. A partnership of American citizen-lawmakers with their elected legislators will in fact make representative government more responsive to the needs of the people.

Some people are cynical—they believe American citizens are unqualified to legislate on the policy issues that affect their lives. But these cynics fail to appreciate or are ignorant of the fact that 70 percent of American citizens have been legislating by initiative in states and local governments for the last 100 years. Their record is as good as legislative representatives and, from a fiscal point of view, far superior. It's almost 100 percent of the citizenry if you include referenda on bond issues—serious legislating. Indeed, this idea of lawmaking by the people has been in operation at national and local levels for more than 150 years in what may be the most advanced political culture in history, the democratic republic of Switzerland.

We need to find solutions for a number of problems.

Consider our tax system. Its unfairness is only superseded by its incomprehensibility. Imagine for a moment what life will be like when we recognize the reality that our government can raise its revenue fairly and simply by eliminating the IRS and all income taxes and replacing them with a straightforward and effective national sales tax with proper consideration for the necessities of life through a pre-bate. It's called the Fair Tax—H.R. and S. 25 in Congress. I doubt the Congress will enact it, and that is why I pledge to place it before the people. We'll "Let the people decide."

Consider Social Security. Why do our representatives threaten our children's and grandchildren's future by taking money from the Social Security trust fund and spending it on the daily operations of government? As president, I will place before the people a proposal to put real money in the trust fund, investing it properly and identifying the interests of individual beneficiaries so that they can leave their sur-

plus in the fund to their heirs. We'll "Let the people decide."

Consider healthcare. Harry Truman proposed it more than 50 years ago. The Congress has yet to act. I will place before the people a universal healthcare plan. We'll "Let the people decide." It's their health.

It is my unreserved faith and trust in the common sense and wisdom of Americans that brings me here to announce my candidacy for the presidency of the United States. We'll "Let the people decide."

I can stand here today because, throughout my life I have had the love, friendship, and support of family, teachers, friends, business and political colleagues in all the various communities where I have lived. I am blessed with a partner devoted as I am to meaningful causes – the love of my life – my wife, Whitney.

Many Americans are concerned about the War in Iraq, and about the broader question of whether and how a great nation can admit its mistakes and correct them. I believe America is doing harm every day we remain in Iraq – harm to ourselves and to the prospects for peace in the world. I will remove our troops expeditiously and without contingency. President Bush's mistake is not worth the life or maiming of one more American soldier.

In foreign affairs I will pursue aggressive diplomacy – not war.

I will propose an amendment to the Constitution removing the power to declare war from Congress. Since the Congress abdicates its responsibility to the president, I will make any declaration of war the responsibility of the people. Americans are entitled to know the facts and not be misled by the lies of a president and the misjudgments of a Congress. It's the people's treasure and the precious lives of fathers, mothers, sons and daughters that are placed in harm's way. Certainly for this one we will "Let the people decide."

Like most Americans, I consider myself a person of faith. I also celebrate our pluralistic society and believe we need to foster respect for religious diversity. I believe that faith – whatever denomination we choose – should improve us morally and ethically, and encourage our kindness and compassion for all people. It should not be a tool to condemn others, and should not politicize the beliefs of others. Thankfully I was raised a Catholic. As an adult I joined the Unitarian Church, which accepts many paths for spiritual expression.

My campaign will address the issues of the day with concrete solutions. As president I will place my agenda before the American people for decision. We'll "Let the people decide."

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About Senator Mike Gravel

Senator Gravel stepped into the race for the White House in April 2006, the first of what would be eight Democratic contenders. Though he never raised millions of dollars or polled in the high digits, with his outspoken views and righteous anger, his message of empowering the American people resonated with his grassroots supporters. Of course the mainstream media and the political establishment in Washington did their best to marginalize him, just like they did in the 1970s when Gravel took great risks to inform the American public about the lies that led this nation into Vietnam.

Disgusted by the corruption in Washington, Gravel walked away from public office in the 1980s to establish several successful pro-democracy non-profits. Frustrated with his own party's inability to end a terrible war and clean up Washington, Gravel came out of retirement last year to run for public office. His candid views have pitted him against not only the pro-military neo-conservative power bloc that dominates policy in the nation's capital, but the very leadership in the Democratic Party. He held his well-heeled rivals' feet to the fire and forced them to clarify their fuzzy positions on everything from the use of nuclear weapons to stopping the violence in the Middle East.

Like a breath of fresh air, the legacy he will likely leave behind reflects his refreshingly honest and frank views on the most important issues of the day. Hopefully, it will not take another quarter century for America to realize the contributions he has made to this great nation.