

= Mike Gravel =

Maurice Robert " Mike " Gravel (/ ʁ??v?l / ; born May 13 , 1930) is an American politician who is a former Democratic United States Senator from Alaska , who served two terms from 1969 to 1981 , and a candidate in the 2008 U.S. presidential election .

Born and raised in Springfield , Massachusetts , by French @-@ Canadian immigrant parents , Gravel served in the U.S. Army in West Germany , and he later graduated from the Columbia University School of General Studies . He moved to Alaska in the late 1950s , becoming a real estate developer and entering politics . He served in the Alaska House of Representatives from 1963 to 1966 and also became Speaker of the Alaska House . Gravel was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1968 .

As a Senator , Gravel became nationally known for his forceful but unsuccessful attempts to end the draft during the War in Vietnam and for putting the Pentagon Papers into the public record in 1971 at some risk to himself . He conducted an unusual campaign for the Democratic nomination in 1972 for Vice President of the United States , and then played a crucial role in getting Congressional approval for the Trans @-@ Alaska pipeline in 1973 . He was re @-@ elected to the Senate in 1974 , but gradually alienated most of his Alaskan constituencies and his bid for a third term was defeated in a primary election in 1980 .

Gravel returned to business ventures and went through difficult times , suffering corporate and personal bankruptcies amid poor health . He has been a quixotic advocate of direct democracy and the National Initiative . In 2006 , Gravel began a run for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States to promote those ideas . His campaign gained an Internet following and national attention due to forceful , humorous , and politically unorthodox debate appearances during 2007 , but he found very little support in national polls or in 2008 caucuses and primaries . In March 2008 , he announced that he was switching to the Libertarian Party to compete for its presidential nomination and the inclusion of the National Initiative into the Libertarian Platform . At the Libertarian National Convention of 2008 he failed on both counts , and he announced that his political electoral career had ended . He subsequently became an executive for a marijuana products company and continued to speak out on various political issues including Democratic Party politics .

= = Early life , military service , education = =

Gravel was born in Springfield , Massachusetts , one of five children born to French @-@ Canadian immigrant parents , Alphonse and Marie (née Bourassa) Gravel .

His parents were part of the Quebec diaspora , and he was raised in a working @-@ class neighborhood during the Great Depression , speaking only French until he was seven years old . Calling him " Mike " from an early age , his father valued work above all else , while his mother stressed to him the importance of education .

Gravel was educated in parochial schools as a Roman Catholic . There he struggled ? due to what he later said was undiagnosed dyslexia ? and was left back in third grade . He completed elementary school in 1945 and his class voted him " most charming personality " . A summer job as a soda jerk led to Gravel handing out campaign fliers for local candidates on behalf of his boss ; Gravel was immediately impressed with " the awesomeness of political office . "

Gravel then boarded at Assumption Preparatory School in Worcester , Massachusetts , where his performance was initially mediocre . Then an English teacher , the Assumptionist Edgar Bourque , gave him personal attention , improving Gravel 's language skills and instructing him in public speaking . Gravel 's grades improved measurably in his final year , and he graduated in 1949 . He has a sister , Marguerite , who became a Holy Cross nun , but Gravel himself struggled with the Catholic faith . He studied for one year at Assumption College , a Catholic school in Worcester , then transferred for his sophomore year to American International College in Springfield . Journalist I. F. Stone and philosopher Bertrand Russell strongly influenced Gravel in their willingness to challenge assumptions and oppose social convention and political authority .

Around May 1951 , Gravel saw that he was about to be drafted and instead enlisted in the U.S.

Army for a three @-@ year term so that he could get into the Counterintelligence Corps . After basic training and counterintelligence school at Fort Holabird in Maryland and in South Carolina , he went to Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning , Georgia . While he expected to be sent off to the Korean War when he graduated as a second lieutenant in early 1952 , he was instead assigned to Stuttgart , West Germany , as a Special Adjutant in the Army 's Communications Intelligence Service . There he had an adventurous time moving around the country , conducting surveillance operations on civilians , and paying off spies . After about a year he transferred to Orléans , France , where his French language abilities (if not his Quebec @-@ American accent) allowed him to infiltrate French communist rallies . He worked as a Special Agent in the Counterintelligence Corps until 1954 , eventually becoming a first lieutenant .

Following his discharge , Gravel entered the Columbia University School of General Studies in New York City , where he studied economics and received a B.S. in 1956 . He moved to New York " flat broke " , and supported himself by working as a bar boy in a hotel , driving a taxicab , and working in the investment bond department at Bankers Trust . During this time he left the Catholic religion .

= = Move to Alaska = =

Gravel " decided to become a pioneer in a faraway place , " and moved to pre @-@ statehood Alaska in August 1956 , without funds or a job , looking for a place where someone without social or political connections could be a viable candidate for public office . Alaska 's voting age of 19 , less than most other states ' 21 , played a role in his decision , as did its newness and cooler climate . Broke when he arrived , he immediately found work in real estate sales until winter arrived . Gravel then was employed as a brakeman for the Alaska Railroad , working the snow @-@ clearing train on the Anchorage @-@ Fairbanks run . Subsequently he opened a small real estate brokerage in Anchorage (the Territory of Alaska not requiring a license) and saved enough so as not to have to work the railroad again . Gravel joined the Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship , and would continue a sporadic relationship with the movement throughout his life .

Gravel married Rita Jeannette Martin , who had been Anchorage 's " Miss Fur Rendezvous " of 1958 , on April 29 , 1959 . They had two children , Martin Anthony Gravel and Lynne Denise Gravel , born c . 1960 and 1962 respectively .

Meanwhile , he went to Washington , D.C. in 1957 to campaign for Alaskan statehood via the " Tennessee Plan " : dressed as Paul Revere , he rode with a petition to the steps of the U.S. Capitol . Seeing Alaska as a wide @-@ open place with no political establishment or entrenched interests , and using the slogan " Gravel , the Roadbed to Prosperity " , he ran for the territorial legislature in 1958 but lost . He went on a national speaking tour concerning tax reform in 1959 , sponsored by the Jaycees . He ran without avail for the City Council in Anchorage in 1960 . During this time , he had become a successful real estate agent ; after the 1960 election , he became a property developer in a mobile home park on the outskirts of Anchorage . A partner ran into financial difficulty , however , and the project went into Chapter 11 bankruptcy and Gravel was forced out in 1962 .

= = State legislator = =

With the support of Alaska wholesale grocer Barney Gottstein and supermarket builder Larry Carr , Gravel ran for the Alaska House of Representatives representing Anchorage in 1962 , initially assigned the 10th and then 8th districts , and won .

Gravel served in the Alaska House of Representatives from January 28 , 1963 to January 22 , 1967 , winning re @-@ election in 1964 . In his first term , he served as a minority member on two House committees : Commerce , and Labor and Management .

He coauthored and sponsored the act that created the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights . Gravel was the chief architect of the law that created a regional high school system for rural Alaska ; this allowed Alaska Natives to attend schools near where they lived , instead of having to go to schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the lower 48 states .

During the half @-@ years that the legislature was not in session , Gravel resumed his real estate

work . With Gottstein and Carr 's backing , he became quite successful as a property developer on the Kenai Peninsula .

During 1965 and 1966 , he served as the Speaker of the House , surprising observers by winning that post . Gravel convinced former Speaker Warren A. Taylor to not try for the position against him by promising Taylor chairmanship of the Rules Committee , then reneged on the promise . Gravel denied later press charges that he had promised but not delivered on other committee chairmanships . As Speaker he antagonized fellow lawmakers by imposing his will on the legislature 's committees and feuded with Alaska State Senate president Robert J. McNealy .

Gravel did not run for re @-@ election in 1966 , instead choosing to run for Alaska 's seat in the U.S. House of Representatives , losing in a primary to four @-@ term incumbent Democrat Ralph Rivers by 1 @,@ 300 votes and splitting the Democratic party in the process . Rivers lost the general election that year to Republican state Senator Howard Wallace Pollock .

Following his defeat , Gravel returned to the real estate business in Anchorage .

= = U.S. Senator = =

= = = Election to Senate in 1968 = = =

In 1968 he ran against the 81 @-@ year @-@ old incumbent Democratic Senator Ernest Gruening , a popular former governor of the Alaska Territory who was considered one of the fathers of Alaska 's statehood , for his party 's nomination to the U.S. Senate . Gravel 's campaign was primarily based on his youth rather than issue differences . He hired Joseph Napolitan , the first self @-@ described political consultant , in late 1966 . They spent over a year and a half planning a short , nine @-@ day primary election campaign that featured the slogans " Alaska first " and " Let 's do something about the state we 're in " , the distribution of a collection of essays entitled Jobs and More Jobs , and the creation of a half @-@ hour , well @-@ produced , glamorized biographical film of Gravel , Man for Alaska . The film was shown twice a day on every television station in Alaska and carried by plane and shown on home projectors in hundreds of Alaska Native villages . The heavy showings quickly reversed a 2 ? to ? 1 Gruening lead in polls into a Gravel lead . Gravel visited many remote villages by seaplane and showed a thorough understanding of the needs of the bush country and the fishing and oil industries . Gravel also benefited by being deliberately ambiguous about his Vietnam policy . Gruening had been one of only two Senators to vote against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and his opposition to President Lyndon B. Johnson 's war policies was harming him among the Democratic electorate ; according to Gravel , " ... all I had to do was stand up and not deal with the subject , and people would assume that I was to the right of Ernest Gruening , when in point of fact I was to the left of him . "

Gravel beat Gruening in the primary in a tight result with a margin of about 2 @,@ 000 votes . Gruening found " the unexpected defeat hard to take " and thought that some aspects of his opponent 's biographical film had misled viewers . In the general election , Gravel faced Republican Elmer E. Rasmuson , a banker and former mayor of Anchorage . College students in the state implored Gruening to run a write @-@ in campaign as an Independent , but legal battles prevented the senator from getting approval for it until only two weeks were left . A late appearance by anti @-@ war presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy could not offset Gruening 's lack of funds and endorsements ; meanwhile , Gravel and Rasmuson both saturated local media with their filmed biographies . On November 5 , 1968 , Gravel won the general election , gaining 45 percent of the vote against 37 percent for Rasmuson and 18 percent for Gruening .

= = = Senate assignments and style = = =

When Gravel joined the Senate in January 1969 , he requested and received a seat on the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee , which had direct relevance to Alaskan issues . He also got a spot on the Public Works Committee , which he held throughout his time in the Senate . Finally , he was a

member of the Select Committee on Small Business . In 1971 he became chair of the Public Works Committee 's Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds , then by 1973 he was chair of its Subcommittee on Water Resources , then later its Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution . Gravel was also initially named to the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations . By 1973 Gravel was off the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee and the Select Small Business Committee and instead a member of the Finance Committee , and by 1977 was chair of that body 's Subcommittee on Energy and Foundations . By 1973 he had also been on the ad hoc Special Committee to Study Secret and Confidential Government Documents .

By his own admission , Gravel was too new and " too abrasive " to be effective in the Senate by the usual means of seniority @-@ based committee assignments or negotiating deals with other senators , and was sometimes seen as arrogant by the more senior members . Gravel instead relied upon attention @-@ getting gestures to achieve what he wanted , hoping national exposure would force other senators to listen to him . As part of this he voted with Southern Democrats to keep the Senate filibuster rule in place , and accordingly supported Russell Long and Robert Byrd but opposed Ted Kennedy in Senate leadership battles . In retrospective assessment , University of Alaska Anchorage history professor Stephen Haycox would say , " Loose cannon is a good description of Gravel 's Senate career . He was an off @-@ the @-@ wall guy , and you weren 't really ever sure what he would do . "

= = = Nuclear issues and the Cold War = = =

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the U.S. Department of Defense was in the process of performing tests for the nuclear warhead for the Spartan anti @-@ ballistic missile . Two tests , the " Milrow " and " Cannikin " tests , were planned , involving the detonation of nuclear bombs under Amchitka Island in Alaska . The Milrow test would be a one megaton calibration exercise for the second , and larger five megaton , Cannikin test , which would measure the effectiveness of the warhead . Gravel opposed the tests in Congress . Before the Milrow test took place in October 1969 , he wrote that there were significant risks of earthquakes and other adverse consequences , and called for an independent national commission on nuclear and seismic safety to be created ; he then made a personal appeal to President Nixon to stop the test .

After Milrow was conducted , there was continued pressure on the part of environmental groups against going forward with the larger Cannikin test , while the Federation of American Scientists claimed that the warhead being tested was already obsolete . In May 1971 , Gravel sent a letter to U.S. Atomic Energy Commission hearings held in Anchorage , in which he said the risk of the test was not worth taking . Eventually a group not involving Gravel took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court , which declined to issue an injunction against it , and the Cannikin test took place as scheduled in November 1971 . Gravel had failed to stop the tests (notwithstanding his later claims during his 2008 presidential campaign) .

Nuclear power was considered an environmentally clean alternative for the commercial generation of electricity and was part of a popular national policy for the peaceful use of atomic energy in the 1950s and 1960s . Gravel publicly opposed this policy ; besides the dangers of nuclear testing , he was a vocal critic of the Atomic Energy Commission , which oversaw American nuclear efforts , and of the powerful United States Congress Joint Committee on Atomic Energy , which had a stranglehold on nuclear policy and which Gravel tried to circumvent . In 1971 , Gravel sponsored a bill to impose a moratorium on nuclear power plant construction and to make power utilities liable for any nuclear accidents ; in 1975 , he was still proposing similar moratoriums . By 1974 , Gravel was allied with Ralph Nader 's organization in opposing nuclear power .

Six months before U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger 's secret mission to the People 's Republic of China (P.R.C.) in July 1971 , Gravel introduced legislation to recognize and normalize relations with China , including a proposal for unity talks between the P.R.C. and the Republic of China (Taiwan) regarding the Chinese seat on the U.N. Security Council . Gravel reiterated his position in favor of recognition , with four other senators in agreement , during Senate hearings in June 1971 .

= = = Vietnam War , the draft , and the Pentagon Papers = = =

President Richard Nixon had campaigned in 1968 on a promise to end the U.S. military draft , a decision endorsed by the February 1970 report of the Gates Commission . The existing draft law was scheduled to conclude at the end of June 1971 , and the Senate faced a contentious debate about whether to extend it as the Vietnam War continued . The Nixon administration announced in February 1971 that it wanted a two @-@ year extension to June 1973 , after which the draft would end ; Army planners had already been operating under the assumption of a two @-@ year extension , after which an all @-@ volunteer force would be in place . Skeptics such as Senate Armed Services Committee chairman John Stennis thought this unrealistic and wanted a four @-@ year extension , but the two @-@ year proposal is what went forward in Congress . By early May 1971 , Gravel had indicated his intention to filibuster the draft renewal legislation , halting conscription and thereby bringing U.S. involvement in the war to a rapid end .

By June 1971 , some Democratic senators opposed to the war wanted to limit the renewal to a one @-@ year extension , while others wanted to end it immediately ; Gravel reiterated that he was one of the latter , saying , " It 's a senseless war , and one way to do away with it is to do away with the draft . " A Senate vote on June 4 indicated majority support for the two @-@ year extension . On June 18 Gravel announced again his intention to counteract that by filibustering the renewal legislation , defending the practice against those who associated it only with blocking civil rights legislation . The first filibuster attempt failed on June 23 when , by three votes , the Senate voted cloture for only the fifth time since 1927 .

Protracted negotiations took place over House conference negotiations on the bill , revolving in large part around Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield 's eventually unsuccessful amendment to tie renewal to a troop withdrawal timetable from Vietnam ; during this time the draft law expired and no more were conscripted . On August 5 , the Nixon administration pleaded for a renewal before the Senate went on recess , but Gravel blocked Stennis 's attempt to limit debate , and no vote was held . Finally on September 21 , 1971 , the Senate invoked cloture over Gravel 's second filibuster attempt by one vote , and then passed the two @-@ year draft extension . Gravel 's attempts to stop the draft had failed (notwithstanding Gravel 's later claims that he had stopped or shortened the draft , taken at face value in some media reports , during his 2008 presidential campaign) .

Meanwhile , on June 13 , 1971 , The New York Times began printing large portions of the Pentagon Papers . The papers were a large collection of secret government documents and studies pertaining to the Vietnam War , of which former Defense Department analyst Daniel Ellsberg had made unauthorized copies and was determined to make public . Ellsberg had for a year and a half approached members of Congress ? such as William Fulbright , George McGovern , Charles Mathias , and Pete McCloskey ? about publishing the documents , on the grounds that the Speech or Debate Clause of the Constitution would give congressional members immunity from prosecution , but all had refused . Instead , Ellsberg gave the documents to the Times .

The U.S. Justice Department immediately tried to halt publication , on the grounds that the information revealed within the papers harmed the national interest . Within the next two weeks , a federal court injunction halted publication in The Times ; The Washington Post and several other newspapers began publishing parts of the documents , with some of them also being halted by injunctions ; and the whole matter went to the U.S. Supreme Court for arguments . Looking for an alternate publication mechanism , Ellsberg returned to his idea of having a member of Congress read them , and chose Gravel based on the latter 's efforts against the draft ; Gravel agreed where previously others had not . Ellsberg arranged for the papers to be given to Gravel on June 26 via an intermediary , Washington Post editor Ben Bagdikian . Gravel used his counter @-@ intelligence experience to choose a midnight transfer in front of the Mayflower Hotel in the center of Washington .

On the night of June 29 , 1971 , Gravel attempted to read the papers on the floor of the Senate as part of his filibuster against the draft , but was thwarted when no quorum could be formed . Gravel instead convened a session of the Buildings and Grounds subcommittee that he chaired . He got

New York Congressman John Dow to testify that the war had soaked up funding for public buildings , thus making discussion of the war relevant to the committee . He began reading from the papers with the press in attendance , omitting supporting documents that he felt might compromise national security , and declaring , " It is my constitutional obligation to protect the security of the people by fostering the free flow of information absolutely essential to their democratic decision @-@ making . "

He read until 1 a.m. , until with tears and sobs he said that he could no longer physically continue , the previous three nights of sleeplessness and fear about the future having taken their toll . Gravel ended the session by , with no other senators present , establishing unanimous consent to insert 4 @,@ 100 pages of the Papers into the Congressional Record of his subcommittee . The following day , the Supreme Court 's New York Times Co. v. United States decision ruled in favor of the newspapers and publication in The Times and others resumed . In July 1971 , Bantam Books published an inexpensive paperback edition of the papers containing the material The Times had published .

Gravel , too , wanted to privately publish the portion of the papers he had read into the record , believing that " immediate disclosure of the contents of these papers will change the policy that supports the war . " After being turned down by many commercial publishers , on August 4 he reached agreement with Beacon Press , the publishing arm of the Unitarian Universalist Association , of which Gravel was a member . Announced on August 17 and published on October 22 , 1971 , this four @-@ volume , relatively expensive set became the " Senator Gravel Edition " , which studies from Cornell University and the Annenberg Center for Communication have labeled as the most complete edition of the Pentagon Papers to be published . The " Gravel Edition " was edited and annotated by Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn , and included an additional volume of analytical articles on the origins and progress of the war , also edited by Chomsky and Zinn . Beacon Press then was subjected to a FBI investigation ; an outgrowth of this was the Gravel v. United States court case , which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled upon in June 1972 ; it held that the Speech or Debate Clause did grant immunity to Gravel for his reading the papers in his subcommittee , did grant some immunity to Gravel 's congressional aide , but granted no immunity to Beacon Press in relation to their publishing the same papers .

The events of 1971 changed Gravel in the months following from an obscure freshman senator in a far corner of the country to a nationally visible political figure . He became a sought @-@ after speaker on the college circuit as well as at political fundraisers , opportunities he welcomed as lectures were " the one honest way a Senator has to supplement his income . " The Democratic candidates for the 1972 presidential election sought out his endorsement . In January 1972 Gravel did endorse Maine Senator Ed Muskie , hoping his endorsement would help Muskie with the party 's left wing and in the ethnic French @-@ Canadian areas in first primary state New Hampshire (which Muskie won , but not strongly , and his campaign faltered soon thereafter) . In April 1972 , Gravel appeared on all three network nightly newscasts to decry the Nixon administration 's reliance on Vietnamization by making reference to the secret National Security Study Memorandum 1 document , which stated it would take 8 ? 13 years before the Army of the Republic of Vietnam could defend South Vietnam . Gravel made excerpts from the study public , but his attempt to read NSSM 1 into the Congressional Record was blocked by Senators Robert P. Griffin and William B. Saxbe .

= = = Run for Vice President in 1972 = = =

Gravel actively campaigned for the office of Vice President of the United States during the 1972 presidential election , announcing on June 2 , 1972 , over a month before the 1972 Democratic National Convention began , that he was interested in running for the nomination should the choice be opened up to convention delegates . Towards this end he began soliciting delegates for their support in advance of the convention . He was not alone in this effort , as former Governor of Massachusetts Endicott Peabody had been running a quixotic campaign for the same post since the prior year . Likely presidential nominee George McGovern was in fact considering the unusual move

of naming three or four acceptable vice @-@ presidential candidates and letting the delegates choose .

At the convention 's final day on July 14 , 1972 , presidential nominee McGovern selected and announced Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri as his vice @-@ presidential choice . Eagleton was unknown to many delegates and the choice seemed to smack of traditional ticket balancing considerations . Thus , there were delegates willing to look elsewhere . Gravel was nominated by Bettye Fahrenkamp , the Democratic National Committeewoman from Alaska . He then seconded his own nomination , breaking down in tears at his own words and maybe trying to withdraw his nomination . In any case he won 226 delegate votes , coming in third behind Eagleton and Frances " Sissy " Farenthold of Texas , in chaotic balloting that included several other candidates as well .

For his efforts , Gravel attracted some attention : famed writer Norman Mailer would say he " provided considerable excitement " and was " good @-@ looking enough to have played leads in B @-@ films " , while Rolling Stone correspondent Hunter S. Thompson said Gravel " probably said a few things that might have been worth hearing , under different circumstances ... " Yet , the whole process had been doubly disastrous for the Democrats . The time consumed with the nominating and seconding and other speeches of all the vice @-@ presidential candidates had lost the attention of the delegates on the floor and pushed McGovern 's speech until 3 : 30 a.m. The haste with which Eagleton had been selected led to surprise when his past mental health treatments were revealed ; he withdrew from the ticket soon after the convention , to be replaced by Sargent Shriver .

= = = Re @-@ election to Senate in 1974 = = =

Several years earlier , Alaska politicians had speculated that Gravel would have a hard time getting both renominated and elected when his first term expired , given that he was originally elected without a base party organization and tended to focus on national rather than local issues .

Nonetheless , in 1974 Gravel was re @-@ elected to the Senate , winning 58 percent of the vote against 42 percent for Republican State Senator C. R. Lewis , who was a national officer of the John Birch Society .

= = = Second term = = =

In September 1975 , Gravel was named as one of several Congressional Advisers to the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations , which met to discuss problems related to economic development and international economic cooperation .

In June 1976 , Gravel was the focus of a federal investigation into allegations that he was involved in a sex @-@ for @-@ vote arrangement . Congressional staff clerk Elizabeth Ray (who was already the subject of a sex scandal that led to the downfall of Representative Wayne Hays) stated that in August 1972 , she had sex with Gravel aboard a houseboat on the Potomac River , under the instruction of Representative Kenneth J. Gray , her boss at the time . Gray allegedly wanted to secure Gravel 's support for further funding for construction of the National Visitor Center in Washington , a troubled project that was under the jurisdiction of subcommittees that both members chaired . Another Congressional staffer said she witnessed the boat encounter , but Gravel said at the time that he had never met either of the women . Both Gravel and Gray strongly denied that they had made any arrangement regarding legislation , and neither was ever charged with any wrongdoing . Decades later , Gravel wrote that he had indeed had sex with Ray , but had not changed any votes because of it .

= = = Alaskan issues = = =

By 1971 , Gravel was urging construction of the much @-@ argued Trans @-@ Alaska pipeline , addressing environmental concerns by saying that the pipeline 's builders and operators should have " total and absolute " responsibility for any consequent environmental damage . Two years later , the debate over the pipeline came to a crux , with The New York Times describing it as "

environmentalists [in] a holy war with the major oil companies . " In February 1973 the U.S. Court of Appeals blocked the issuance of permits for construction ; Gravel and fellow Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens reacted by urging Congress to pass legislation overturning the court 's decision . Environmentalists opposed to the pipeline , such as the Environmental Defense Fund and the Sierra Club then sought to use the recently passed National Environmental Policy Act to their advantage ; Gravel designed an amendment to the pipeline bill that would immunize the pipeline from any further court challenges under that law , and thus speed its construction . Passage of the amendment became the key battle regarding the pipeline . On July 17 , 1973 , in a dramatic roll call vote , the Gravel amendment was approved as a 49 ? 49 tie was broken in favor by Vice President Spiro Agnew . The actual bill enabling the pipeline then passed easily ; Gravel had triumphed .

In opposition to the Alaskan fishing industry , Gravel advocated American participation in the formation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea . For two years he opposed legislation that established a 200 @-@ mile (320 km) Exclusive Economic Zone for marine resources . He was one of only 19 senators to vote against Senate approval for the expanded zone in 1976 , saying it would undermine the U.S. position in Law of the Sea negotiations and that nations arbitrarily extending their fishing rights limits would " produce anarchy of the seas . " The legislation was passed , and the United States has signed but never ratified the Law of the Sea treaty .

During his first year in the Senate Gravel urged abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs . In the early 1970s Gravel supported a demonstration project that established links between Alaskan villages and the National Institute of Health in Bethesda , Maryland , for medical diagnostic communications . Gravel helped secure a private grant to facilitate the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1977 , attended by Inuit representatives from Alaska , Canada , and Greenland . These conferences now also include representatives from Russia . In 1977 , Gravel helped lead an effort to have the U.S. Interior Department rename Mount McKinley to Denali ; this eventually led to Denali National Park being so named . Subsequently Gravel proposed a never @-@ built " Denali City " development above the Tokositna River near the mountain , to consist of a giant Teflon dome enclosing hotels , golf courses , condominiums , and commercial buildings .

A key , emotional issue in the state at the time was " locking up Alaska " , making reference to allocation of its vast , mostly uninhabited land . In 1978 Gravel blocked passage , via procedural delays such as walking out of House @-@ Senate conference committee meetings , of a complex bill which represented a compromise on land use policy . The bill would have put some of Alaska 's vast federal land holdings under state control while preserving other portions for federal parks and refuges ; the action would earn Gravel the enmity of fellow Alaska Senator Ted Stevens . In 1980 , a new lands bill came up for consideration , that was less favorable to Alaskan interests and more liked by environmentalists ; it set aside 127 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 acres (510 @,@ 000 km2) of Alaska 's 375 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 acres (1 @,@ 520 @,@ 000 km2) for national parks , conservation areas , and other restricted federal uses . Gravel blocked it , as not ensuring enough future development in the state . A new compromise version of the bill came forward , which reduced the land set aside to 104 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 acres (420 @,@ 000 km2) . Gravel , in representation of Alaskan interests , tried to stop the bill , including staging a filibuster . The Senate , however , voted cloture and then passed the bill . Frustrated , Gravel said " the legislation denies Alaska its rights as a state , and denies the U.S. crucial strategic resources , " and commented that the Senate was " a little bit like a tank of barracudas . "

In 1978 , Gravel authored and secured the passage into law of the General Stock Ownership Corporation , that became Subchapter U of the Tax Code under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 . While that was originally done as a prerequisite to a failed 1980 Alaskan ballot initiative that would have paid dividends to Alaskan citizens for pipeline @-@ related revenue , it also turned out to be significant in the development of binary economics .

= = = Loss of Senate seat in 1980 = = =

In 1980 , Gravel was challenged for the Democratic Party 's nomination by State Representative Clark Gruening , the grandson of the man Gravel had defeated in a primary 12 years earlier .

Several factors made Gravel vulnerable . As an insurgent candidate in 1968 , Gravel had never established a firm party base . Not liking to hunt or fish , he was also always culturally suspect in the state . A group of Democrats , including future governor Steve Cowper , led the campaign against Gravel , with Gravel 's actions in respect to the 1978 and 1980 Alaskan lands bills a major issue , especially given that the latter 's dénouement happened but a week before the primary . The sources of Gravel 's campaign funds , some of which came from political action committees outside the state , also became an issue in the contest . Another factor may have been Alaska 's blanket primary system of the time , which allowed unlimited voting across party lines and from its many independents ; Republicans believed Gruening would be an easier candidate to defeat in the general election .

Gruening won the bitterly fought primary , with about 55 percent of the vote to Gravel 's 44 percent . Gravel would later concede that by the time of his defeat , he had alienated " almost every constituency in Alaska . "

Gruening lost the general election to Republican Frank Murkowski . Gravel was the last Democrat to represent Alaska in Congress for 28 years , until Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich defeated Stevens , by now an aged , iconic figure who had just been convicted of seven felonies for taking unreported gifts , in a very close and protracted election result in mid @-@ November 2008 . (The charges against Stevens were subsequently dropped due to prosecutorial misconduct .)

= = Career after leaving the Senate = =

= = = A difficult transition = = =

Gravel took the 1980 defeat hard , recalling years later : " I had lost my career . I lost my marriage . I was in the doldrums for ten years after my defeat , " and " Nobody wanted to hire me for anything important . I felt like I was worthless . I didn 't know what I could do . " By his own later description , Gravel had been a womanizer while in the Senate , and in December 1980 he and his wife Rita separated . They filed for divorce in September 1981 ; she would later get all of his Senate pension income .

During the 1980s , Gravel was a real estate developer in Anchorage and Kenai , Alaska , a consultant , and a stockbroker . One of his real estate ventures , a condominium business , was forced to declare bankruptcy and a lawsuit ensued . During 1986 , Gravel worked in partnership with Merrill Lynch Capital Markets to buy losses that financially troubled Alaska Native Corporations could not take as tax deductions and sell them to large national companies looking for tax writeoffs .

Gravel married his second wife , Whitney Stewart Gravel , a former administrative assistant for Senator Jacob Javits , in 1984 .

= = = Return to politics = = =

In 1989 , Mike Gravel reentered politics . He founded and led The Democracy Foundation , which promotes direct democracy . He established the Philadelphia II corporation , which seeks to replicate the original 1787 Constitutional Convention in bringing direct democracy about . Around 2000 , David Parrish began helping Gravel on a technical level ; upon the former 's death in 2003 , Michael Grant took over the role of running Gravel 's websites and technology efforts .

Gravel led a quixotic effort to get a United States Constitutional amendment to allow voter @-@ initiated federal legislation similar to state ballot initiatives . He argued that Americans are able to legislate responsibly , and that the Act and Amendment in the National Initiative would allow American citizens to become " law makers " .

In 2001 , Gravel became director of the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution , where he admired institute co @-@ founder Gregory Fossedal 's work on direct democracy in Switzerland . By 2004 , Gravel had become chair of the institute , and Fossedal (who in turn was a director of the Democracy Foundation) gave the introduction at Gravel 's presidential announcement .

Mike and Whitney Gravel lived in Arlington County , Virginia , until 2010 and now reside in Burlingame , California . They have the two grown children from his first marriage , Martin Gravel and Lynne Gravel Mosier , and four grandchildren . Whitney Gravel 's income has sustained the couple since 1998 . In the 2000s (decade) , Gravel suffered poor health , requiring three surgeries in 2003 for back pain and neuropathy . Due to unreimbursed medical expenses and debts from his political causes , he declared personal bankruptcy in 2004 . He began taking a salary from the non @-@ profit organizations for which he was working ; much of that income was lent to his presidential campaign . In 2007 , he declared that he had " zero net worth . "

= = = Barnes Review controversy = = =

In June 2003 , Gravel gave a speech on direct democracy at a conference hosted by the American Free Press . The event was cosponsored by the Barnes Review , a journal that endorses Holocaust denial . In the wake of criticism for his appearance , Gravel has said repeatedly that he does not share such a view , stating , " You better believe I know that six million Jews were killed . I 've been to the Holocaust Museum . I 've seen the footage of General Eisenhower touring one of the camps . They 're [referring to the Barnes Review and publisher Willis Carto] nutty as loons if they don 't think it happened " . The newspaper had intended to interview Gravel about the National Initiative . Gravel later recounted the background to the event :

" He [Carto] liked the idea of the National Initiative . I figured it was an opportunity to discuss it . Whether it is the far right , far left , whatever , I 'll make my pitch to them . They gave me a free subscription to American Free Press . They still send it to me today . I flip through it sometimes . It has some extreme views , and a lot of the ads in it are even more extreme and make me want to upchuck . Anyways , sometime later , Carto contacted me to speak at that Barnes Review Conference . I had never heard of the Barnes Review , didn 't know anything about it or what they stood for . I was just coming to give a presentation about the National Initiative . I was there maybe 30 minutes . I could tell from the people in the room (mainly some very old men) that they were pretty extreme . I gave my speech , answered some questions and left . I never saw the agenda for the day or listened to any of the other presentations . "

The group invited Gravel to speak again , but he declined .

= = Political positions = =

Gravel has stated that he is an advocate for " a national , universal single @-@ payer not @-@ for @-@ profit health care system " in the United States which would utilize vouchers and enable citizens to choose their own doctor . He has proposed to index veteran health care entitlements to take full account of increases in the costs of care and medicine . He supports a drug policy that legalizes and regulates all drugs , treating drug abuse as a medical issue , rather than a criminal matter . Gravel favors a guest worker program , supports the FairTax proposal that calls for eliminating the IRS and the income tax and replacing it with a progressive national sales tax of 23 percent on newly manufactured items and services , retaining progressivity via all taxes on spending up to the poverty level being refunded to every household . Gravel has advocated that carbon energy should be taxed to provide the funding for a global effort to bring together the world 's scientific and engineering communities to develop energy alternatives to significantly reduce the world 's energy dependence on carbon .

Gravel in principle does not object to the use of embryonic stem cells for medical research purposes . He is avowedly pro @-@ choice on the issue of abortion and women 's reproductive rights . He supports constitutional amendments towards direct democracy . His political leanings and convictions are also in his 1972 manifesto , Citizen Power : A People 's Platform .

= = 2008 presidential campaign = =

At the start of 2006 , Gravel decided the best way he could promote direct democracy and the

National Initiative was to run for president . On April 17 , 2006 , Gravel became the first candidate for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States in the 2008 election , announcing his run in a speech to the National Press Club in Washington , D.C. Short on campaign cash , he took public transportation to get to his announcement . Other principal Gravel positions were the FairTax , withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq within 120 days , a single payer national health care system , and term limits .

Gravel campaigned almost full @-@ time in New Hampshire , the first primary state , following his announcement . Opinion polls of contenders for the Democratic nomination showed Gravel with 1 percent or less support . By the end of March 2007 , Gravel 's campaign had less than \$ 500 in cash on hand against debts of nearly \$ 90 @,@ 000 .

Because of his time in the Senate , Gravel was invited to many of the early Democratic presidential debates . During the initial one at South Carolina State University on April 26 , 2007 , he suggested a bill requiring the president to withdraw from Iraq on pain of criminal penalties . He also advocated positions such as opposing preemptive nuclear war . He stated that the Iraq War had the effect of creating more terrorists and that the " war was lost the day that George Bush invaded Iraq on a fraudulent basis . " Regarding his fellow candidates , he said , " I got to tell you , after standing up with them , some of these people frighten me ? they frighten me . " Media stories said that Gravel was responsible for much of whatever " heat " and " flashpoints " had taken place . Gravel gained considerable publicity by shaking up the normally staid multiple @-@ candidate format ; The New York Times ' media critic said that what Gravel had done was " steal a debate with outrageous , curmudgeonly statements . " The Internet was a benefit : a YouTube video of his responses in the debate was viewed more than 225 @,@ 892 times , ranking seventeenth in most views for week and first among news and politics clips ; his name became the fifteenth most searched @-@ for in the blogosphere ; and his website garnered more traffic than those of frontrunners Hillary Rodham Clinton , Barack Obama , or John Edwards . Gravel appeared on the popular Colbert Report on television on May 2 , and his campaign and career were profiled in national publications such as Salon . Two wordless , Warholesque campaign videos , " Rock " and " Fire " , were released on YouTube in late May and became hits , and eventually gained over 760 @,@ 000 and 185 @,@ 000 views respectively . " Rock , " in turn , was given airtime during an episode of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart . Some thirty @-@ five years after he first achieved the national spotlight , he had found it again .

All this did not improve his performance in the polls ; a May 2007 CNN poll showed him with less than 0 @.@ 5 percent support among Democrats . Gravel was in the next several debates , in one case after CNN reversed a decision to exclude him . Gravel , as with some of the other second @-@ tier candidates , did not get as much time as the leaders ; during the June 2 , 2007 , New Hampshire debate , which lasted two hours , he was asked 10 questions and allowed to speak for five minutes and 37 seconds .

During the July 23 , 2007 , CNN @-@ YouTube presidential debate , Gravel responded to audience applause when he had complained of a lack of airtime and said : " Thank you . Has it been fair thus far ? " Detractors began to liken him to " the cranky uncle who lives in the attic , " or " the angry old guy that just seemed to want to become angrier . " Berkeley political scientist David Terr found that moderator George Stephanopoulos directed roughly five percent of his questions to Gravel ; in a poll asking who did the best in the debate , Gravel placed seventh among the eight candidates . National opinion polls of contenders for the Democratic nomination continued to show Gravel with one percent or zero percent numbers . By the end of the third @-@ quarter 2007 , Gravel had about \$ 17 @,@ 500 in cash on hand , had collected a total of about \$ 380 @,@ 000 so far during the 2008 election cycle , and was continuing to run a threadbare campaign with minimal staff .

Beginning with the October 30 , 2007 , Philadelphia event , Gravel was excluded from most of the debates , with the debate sponsors or the Democratic National Committee saying Gravel 's campaign had not met fund @-@ raising , polling , or local campaign organizational thresholds . For the Philadelphia exclusion , Gravel blamed corporate censorship on the part of sponsor owner and alleged military @-@ industrial complex member General Electric for his exclusion and mounted a counter @-@ gathering and debate against a video screen a short distance away , but he had lost

his easiest publicity . In reaction , supporters organized " mass donation days " to try to help the campaign gain momentum and funds , such as on December 5 , 2007 , the anniversary of the Repeal of Prohibition .

Gravel did not compete in the initial 2008 vote , the Iowa caucuses , but was still subjected to a false report from MSNBC that he had pulled out of the race afterward . Gravel did focus his attention on the second 2008 vote , the New Hampshire primary . There he received about 400 votes out of some 280 @, @ 000 cast , or 0 @. @ 14 percent , before taking time off to improve his health . He resumed campaigning , but fared no better in subsequent states . By the end of January 2008 , Hillary Clinton , Barack Obama , and Gravel were the only remaining Democrats from the initial debates still running ; Gravel vowed to stay in the presidential campaign until November . On March 11 , 2008 , Gravel continued to remain in the Democratic race but additionally endorsed a Green Party candidate for president , Jesse Johnson , saying he wanted to help Johnson prevail against Green Party rivals Cynthia McKinney and Ralph Nader . By late March , Gravel had almost no fundraising and was only on the ballot in one of the next ten Democratic primaries .

= = = Switch to Libertarian Party = = =

On March 25 , 2008 , Gravel announced that he would leave the Democrats and join the Libertarian Party , saying : " My libertarian views , as well as my strong stance against war , the military industrial complex and American imperialism , seem not to be tolerated by Democratic Party elites who are out of touch with the average American ; elites that reject the empowerment of American citizens I offered to the Democratic Party at the beginning of this presidential campaign with the National Initiative for Democracy . " The following day Gravel entered the race for the 2008 Libertarian presidential nomination , saying that he would have run as a third @-@ party candidate all along except that he needed the public exposure that came from being in the earlier Democratic debates . Gravel 's initial notion of running as a fusion candidate with other parties was met with skepticism and not pursued .

As a Libertarian candidate , Gravel faced resistance to his liberal past and unorthodox positions ; nevertheless , he garnered more support than he had as a Democrat , placing second and third in two April 2008 straw polls . In the May 25 balloting at the 2008 Libertarian National Convention in Denver , Gravel finished fourth out of eight candidates on the initial ballot , with 71 votes out of a total 618 ; he trailed former Congressman and eventual winner Bob Barr , author Mary Ruwart , and businessman Wayne Allyn Root . Gravel 's position did not subsequently improve and he was eliminated on the fourth ballot . Afterwards he stated that " I just ended my political career , " but he vowed to continue promoting his positions as a writer and lecturer .

= = After the campaigns = =

In June 2008 , Gravel endorsed the NYC 9 / 11 Ballot Initiative , saying the measure would create a " citizens commission rather than a government commission " with subpoena power against top U.S. officials to " make a true investigation as to what happened " regarding the September 11 , 2001 terrorist attacks . Gravel subsequently said that , " Individuals in and out of government may certainly have participated with the obviously known perpetrators of this dastardly act . Suspicions abound over the analysis presented by government . Obviously an act that has triggered three wars , Afghan , Iraqi and the continuing War on Terror , should be extensively investigated which was not done and which the government avoids addressing . "

In August 2008 , Gravel was speaking to a crowd of supporters of Sami Al @-@ Arian (who two years earlier had pleaded guilty and been sentenced to prison for a charge of conspiracy in helping Palestinian Islamic Jihad , a " specially designated terrorist " organization) when he was caught on tape saying of Al @-@ Arian 's prosecutor , " Find out where he lives , find out where his kids go to school , find out where his office is : picket him all the time . Call him a racist in signs if you see him . Call him an injustice . Call him whatever you want to call him , but in his face all the time . " Gravel was criticized for potentially involving the children of the prosecutor , and Al @-@ Arian 's family

disavowed the sentiments .

Gravel defended Alaska Governor Sarah Palin after she was chosen as Republican presidential nominee John McCain 's running mate in September 2008 . He praised Palin 's record in standing up to corruption among Alaskan Republicans , thought her national inexperience was an asset not a detriment , and predicted that the " Troopergate " investigation into whether she improperly fired a state official would " come out in her favor . " Gravel made clear he would not support or vote for either McCain @-@ Palin or Obama @-@ Biden in the general election . The following year , Gravel said that Palin 's politics were " terrible , but that doesn 't detract from the fact that she 's a very talented person " . He predicted that Palin would run for president in 2012 and that " she 's going to surprise a lot of people " Palin did not run , but Gravel 's prediction about " TrooperGate " was accurate as Palin was found not to have violated ethics laws .

From mid @-@ 2008 through October 2009 Gravel gave several lectures at South Korean universities about the Korean National Initiative , a Korean adaption of the National Initiative Gravel has proposed in the United States .

In December 2010 , Gravel praised WikiLeaks , in the news during the year for the Afghan War documents leak , Iraq War documents leak , and United States diplomatic cables leak , as the " most significant effort to save democracy (which is slowly being eclipsed by the Military Industrial Complex) since the release of the Pentagon Papers " . Gravel indicated in December 2010 that he might run for president again and possibly challenge President Obama for the Democratic nomination for the 2012 presidential election , but he did not .

Gravel attended the International Conference on Hollywoodism in Tehran in February 2013 , noting that the conference was attended by " various elements of extremes " but saying that it was necessary to discuss how the U.S. film industry portrayed Iran in order to prevent " an insane war " between the two nations . In May 2013 , Gravel was one of several former members of Congress to accept \$ 20 @, @ 000 from the Paradigm Research Group , an advocacy group for UFO disclosure , as part of holding what they termed a Citizen Hearing on Disclosure , modeled after congressional hearings , regarding supposed U.S. government suppression of evidence concerning UFOs . Gravel said , " Something is monitoring the planet , and they are monitoring it very cautiously , because we are a very warlike planet , " and , " What we 're faced with here is , in areas of the media , and the government too , an effort to marginalize and ridicule people who have specific knowledge . "

In December 2014 , he was announced as the new CEO of KUSH , a company which makes marijuana @-@ infused products for medicinal and recreational use , and a subsidiary of Cannabis Sativa , Inc . He also became an Independent Director of Cannabis Sativa .

During the Democratic Party presidential primaries , 2016 , Gravel spoke with high praise of Bernie Sanders , saying " Bernie is one of the most gifted politicians I have ever observed . He 's a person of great integrity and very clever . " He predicted that the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign , 2016 would end with Sanders being elected president , but that Sanders would be unable to get his key reforms through Congress and thus that Sanders and his supporters should back some of the proposals of the National Initiative .

= = Awards and honors = =

In 2008 , Gravel received the Columbia University School of General Studies ' first annual Isaac Asimov Lifetime Achievement Award .

= = Electoral history = =

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