

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 283 TRANSCRIPT

Jimmy Lee Wirt: This is Jimmy Lee Wirt producer of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* with a note for our listeners. Our interview with Senator Mike Gravel was recorded before he dropped out of the Democratic primary to endorse Bernie Sanders.

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman. How are you today, David?

David Feldman: Fantastic.

Steve Skrovan: And the man of the hour Ralph Nader. Same to you Ralph. How are you?

Ralph Nader: Good. Ready for a great show.

Steve Skrovan: We do have a great show today. We welcome former Senator and 2020 Presidential Candidate, Mike Gravel. Senator Gravel has a long history as an anti-war voice during the Vietnam War era. He's also noted for reading *The Pentagon Papers* into *The Congressional Record* at a time when the Nixon Administration's FBI was putting enormous pressure on the press to quash them. And as a candidate running today, Senator Gravel has been excluded from the [2020] Democratic Debates on CNN because he only met one of the qualifying criteria laid out by the Democratic National Committee. He met the donor qualification but did not meet the polling threshold. You have to be receiving 1% in three separate national polls. Apparently other candidates who have been allowed on the debate stage have also only met one criterion. According to *Truthout* that would be Bill de Blasio, Tim Ryan and Michael Bennet, but only Gravel has been excluded. What is the DNC afraid of? Maybe it's his platform, which includes abolishing the Electoral College, 12-year terms [limits] for all federal judges, statehood for Puerto Rico and DC, housing as a human right, requiring corporations to be chartered at the national level, not just Delaware and at not at the state level. We're going to dig into all that with him. And as always, at some point, we'll head over to the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., to get *The Corporate Crime Report* from our trusted Corporate Crime Reporter, Russell Mohkiber, but first let's hear from Mike Gravel. David?

David Feldman: Mike Gravel represented Alaska in the U.S. Senate from 1969 to 1981. During the Vietnam War, he made forceful attempts to end the draft. He is probably most well-known for reading *The Pentagon Papers* into *The Congressional Record*, thereby lending them official legitimacy. A staunch advocate of direct democracy, he left the Democratic Party in 2008 to run on the Libertarian Party ticket in order to introduce these ideas into the national debate. And he's running again in 2020 in the Democratic Party but has been shut out of the debates. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio* Senator Mike Gravel.

Mike Gravel: Thank you for having me.

Ralph Nader: Mike you qualified by getting over 65,000 donors--the rule of the Democratic

National Committee gets you on the presidential primary debate. But the other criterion was you had that, have 1% or more support in three national polls, and the first one you did and the last two you didn't, because they didn't put your name on the poll! So here again, another shenanigan by the Democratic National Committee. Are you going to be able to make it to the next debate?

Mike Gravel: No, no, because what they've done, they've now doubled the amount of donors and I'm sure that they'll put some kind of barrier with respect to the polling. But no, they are not playing with a full deck and I well knew that they didn't want me on the debate, but we won anyway because of the amount of attention that my candidacy had under the leadership of two teenagers in Westchester who've been running the whole show.

Ralph Nader: That's right. It was a featured article in *The New York Times Magazine* on June 6, 2019 how these two teenagers said, "Hey, you know, Mike Gravel. He has the most fundamental pro-democracy reform platform of anybody in the country; he's thought about it--direct democracy, all kinds of reforms, getting rid of the Electoral College, having elections fairer, ranked voting" I'm reading from the list here. And then you go into "ending the nuclear arms threat, pushing non-aggression or peace abroad, developing a Department of Peace, not a Department of War and opposing all kinds of corporate-power shenanigans." And these two teenagers, two teenagers...

Mike Gravel: Ralph, Ralph, that's the shortlist.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, that's the shortlist. One [of the teens] is 18 and one is 19. I guess one is going into the second year at Columbia University and the other one is taking a year off before he goes to Oxford. And they're out of Westchester County in New York. And they've been doing this whole thing. Right?

Mike Gravel: Totally, totally I've done nothing, but just travel. I'd respond to interview requests, which were quite a large number; I was averaging about two or three a week.

Ralph Nader: And that's really something for someone who's into fundamental reform. Why don't you explain your idea of fourth legislature and you've consulted with prominent constitutional law professors here; you've done a lot of your homework. This isn't just something you dreamt up. But explain to our listeners, what you feel the problem is today with American so-called democracy and what your fourth legislature is all about?

Mike Gravel: Well, I've been at it for the last 25 years, and now have got it down into a very, very precise form. What it is, I've landed on a process to create and operate a Legislature of the People where all people would be able to participate in a deliberative process to be able to make laws directly. The first problem is, of course, to get this enacted into law. And so, what I lay out is a process based upon Article VII of the Constitution, wherein people vote directly to empower themselves to make laws. This election is conducted by a group of volunteers who just happen to call themselves "Philadelphia Two". The reason why it has to be volunteers because you can't involve the government in any way because the government would sabotage the process. So, it's

very simple. We had a technology to ask people today: Do you want to become a lawmaker? And if a sufficient number of people say, yes then it becomes a law of the land. The standard for this is

the number of people who voted in the last presidential election, the popular vote. And so, if we meet that standard or above then we declare the law of the land and people are then able to submit proposals to make laws. They submit the proposal by making a request. Now here, let me back up. Once this is created it is created by a constitutional amendment and the amendment follows the precedent of Article VII. So, when the people vote for the amendment, Section 2 of the amendment states, that the fact that people vote for this, they sanction the legality of the vote straightaway. In addition to sanctioning, the first item is of course, approving the powers of the people to make laws. The second is sanctioning the election. The third one is creating a "Citizens' Trust" that will then implement the procedures that are enacted into law parallel with the amendment; you have a law that lays out very detailed deliberative procedures to bring about the lawmaking. The next item is the fact that we appropriate the money to do this, in the constitutional amendment, mind you. And that money is an amount equal to what's appropriated to the Congress every year. And so that would be appropriated to the Legislature of The People. And then the next thing, the people able to introduce legislation would have to be an actual person. So, we do away in one backhanded stroke, with the corporate personhood and everything that that represents. So that's the amendment to the Constitution and the parallel legislation is the procedures that I copied from the Congress from my own experiences as Speaker in Alaska. And it's just a detailed process of the hearing, the drafting, the markups, the election. Now, the voting for laws, would take place over one week's time, 24 hours a day and you could vote from anyplace in the world and it would be with the newest technology. At the time that the legislation is qualified, what happens is you open up a website and all of the activity surrounding the individual website for each law that is proposed is continuous and is totally transparent. It's a process so far superior to any lawmaking done in Congress or any legislature of the country.

Ralph Nader: What if Congress tried to stop this before....?

Mike Gravel: They can't because it's an amendment to the Constitution. Here Congress could say well, they can't make laws. Well, if you've already got the people in the country voting for this 80 million, a 100 million people voting, you just declare it the law of the land, which is exactly what happened under Article VII of the Constitution, declaring that the people who voted for the amendment or ratification, it became the law in those 9 states. So that's all we're doing is just copying the precedent set by the creation of our own government.

Ralph Nader: Who would launch this? Give us a concrete? Would it be 10, 15 people?

Mike Gravel: No, what we did in the concrete is, suppose you and your friends joined with me, say 20, 30 people and then we go out and have to raise the money. Now this election I'm talking about would cost several hundred million dollars, just like a presidential election. And so, we would have to raise that money. But let's say some 1 person, who happens to be a zillionaire with a good heart and wants to see something change, well, s/he could turn around and fund this whole operation. And you see there's no limitation; the election being conducted has to be totally

transparent. If it's not, it won't have any credibility with the people and the people will just not vote. But once the people realize that you have a transparent election being conducted outside of a government; now this group of people wouldn't even organize as a nonprofit because using a nonprofit we might be sabotaged by the corporation or rather the state that grants the nonprofit

license. So, they would just come together and operate under Roberts Rules of Order and then proceed to raise the money and conduct this national election, which will permit the people... see what you're doing is you're giving the people the opportunity to vote to enact this amendment.

Ralph Nader: By the way listeners, back in 1787, when a hundred of those men--they were all white males--assembled in Philadelphia in that hot, big room to draft the Constitution, nobody elected them really, other than themselves and their people. Many of them were rich. And then the Constitution, as it was proposed, out of that big, hot room of 1787, went back to the states for ratification; Connecticut being the first, it was the state legislature and there was a vote to ratify it. And what you're saying, Mike that same process can occur today?

Mike Gravel: Yes, it can. Yes, it can. And here, there's nothing in the Constitution that says the people can do this. There's nothing in the Constitution where the elites have equipped the people to be able to make laws. They purposely left the people out of the equation because they knew the people would not accept slavery. And the whole issue at the foundation of our country is slavery and then the genocide that took place of the indigenous people. So, this process is all resting on the fact that you're asking the people and if the people respond to this transparent process--when I say transparent--everything, all the money that's raised, who's running it, who are employed and all of that is known and visible. Because the key to the success of this is the acceptance by the people and thereby voting for this; this is the same thing. The key to the acceptance of the creation of our country took place by the conventions, not the state legislatures, not the federal government, but conventions of state legislatures that voted for the ratification of the Constitution. And by that vote, they created our country today. And the same process would exist, that the people who vote for this, by that vote, will create a Legislature of The People, and the legislature will be totally independent of government. The legislature will be able to make laws; the government would be able... See the government has monopoly on lawmaking today. And so, this would break up that monopoly. Now, supposing you had a conflict, that the people voted for one law and the legislature changed the law? Well, they would only do that once, because you see, when the people come into the operation of government as lawmakers, they become the senior partners, and if any facet of government were to not behave, they could be destroyed.

Ralph Nader: By the way, for listeners east of the Mississippi, there are 23 states, most of them west of the Mississippi, that have the direct-democracy right in their state constitution, to initiate referendum recall; people can put laws on the ballot and propose laws on the ballot and pass them or they can repeal existing laws or they can recall incumbent state legislators. So, there's that tradition to work off. Let's follow it up. Let's say this people's legislature passes something

and senators sue and take it to the U.S. Supreme Court and the Supreme Court says what you're doing, people's legislature, is unconstitutional. Then what happens?

Mike Gravel: Well, first off, there's nothing in the Constitution that limits it. Now, you're right, they probably would sue and they would go to the Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court has no power to negate this process. The Supreme Court can turn around and interpret the law; they can't change the law. They can interpret the law and by their interpretation is how they effectively

change the law. So, the Supreme Court is out of the picture. The Congress is out of the picture. Here we are appropriating money by constitutional means; now that's never been done. And so, in the Constitution when you have an amendment to the Constitution appropriating the money to fund the Legislature of The People... You see, what happens is that it becomes a constitutional moment. That is, will the will of the people, expressed in a totally transparent election, be overridden by the Congress? Well, the same thing existed in 1788. And that's when the conventions of nine states ratified the Constitution. It became the Constitution of those nine states, and then it just propagated itself forward. Well, the same thing would happen here. Once you have, let's say, the majority of the people who voted in the last election plus maybe another 10, 20 million people in addition that voted for this and the organizers declare it the law of the land, now you have a constitutional moment. Will the Congress supersede the will of the people, as stated in this constitutional amendment or will they not? And in 1788, what they did is they caved in; the opposition, caved in because the confederation was falling apart. They agreed because it was literally the only way to save their interest. Now, will that give us same thing in this regard? I think it's possible, whereas the numbers of people voting is so overwhelming, that the body politic won't have any credibility in order to try and stop it. What we are doing is taking Article I--the First Amendment says that the people have a right to assemble. Well, an election is the assembly of people. That's what it is; you come together and you express a view on something that's under the Constitution. The rest of it is all done voluntarily without the government being involved.

Ralph Nader: Well, the concentration of power in this country in a few hands, has gotten so extreme--economically, politically, culturally, media--that something fundamental has to rise up from the wellsprings of the people of this country. Do you think people are up for this? I mean, you know, half the people don't even vote in presidential elections; it's even worse in congressional elections off year. It's hard to get people to show up at town meetings. You think people are up for this Mike?

Mike Gravel: Well, we don't know. I think that they are. But the reason why we have people not getting involved [is] what's the point of getting involved? Here, you get involved and you vote for some people to change and nothing happens, then you get another vote... here, just listen to the gaggle of comments made by the presidential candidates and harken back to the gaggle four years ago and eight years ago and 12 years ago--nothing changed. It's that old French saying, "plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose." [The more things change, the more they stay the same,] That's what's going on.

Ralph Nader: Well, you know, it is amazing on the presidential debate, Democratic primary, the other day, some of the people who call themselves moderates were taking on Bernie Sanders [and] Elizabeth Warren, for the presumption of assuming that we can have full Medicare for All, everybody in and nobody out, free choice of doctor and hospitals like they have in Canada, at half the per capita price. I mean, that's how low the expectation level is for the protection of the American people with full Medicare that exists in over 40 countries in the world, including Canada. So, I don't know whether people are up to it. How do they even find out about it? In a moment, we're going to tell you listeners, how you can get the Gravel 2020 platform--domestic and foreign policy. It runs over 20 pages, very clearly written. But how do people even find out about it when you have the corporate media in charge?

Mike Gravel: Well, but that's the point I made Ralph, that when you get this group of people, your friends and my friends that are about to begin conducting this election, you have to raise some serious money. Now the founders, they were able to do this because they were the elites. But they badgered the state legislatures of the Confederation to set up these conventions so they could ratify. What we need is to raise the money to go out and conduct this election. Now, the election is totally transparent; I mean, this is not rocket science. We have the technology to record everybody. And once this election is done, and you have the Trust in position, then of course, all of the elections conducting the enactment of laws in every jurisdiction of the United States are done by one organization, the "Citizens' Trust". And of course, we would get the money from the federal treasury to do this. The faith I have is that at some point, this will go viral; this will hit enough people that people will be voting for this, not necessarily because they know in detail, because the people don't know in detail the operation of lawmaking, but now they won't have to know the operation. How many people in the United States know the intricacies of lawmaking in the Congress? Really, it's a very small number of people, the same thing would occur with the Legislature of The People. The process would be such that the people could vote. Now, once the people can vote and make a change themselves, you'll see a change in the participation. People may not vote in the election, but if the law changes and it hurts them, I got to tell you they will show up the next time. The process of voting is so widespread; here you're talking about voting over a one-week period, 24 hours a day. Now, that means that the number of federal laws, state laws and local laws is going to be limited to 52 times a year. And I've put forth a number of examples in the book that I've got coming out, that show that you'd be hard-pressed to get 52 state, federal and local laws designed that really are legitimate. Now, there's a limitation on the people in lawmaking. Once you ask the ["Citizens' Trust"] to draft the law for you based on the concept that you have, the next thing that occurs is that the sponsors--that's us sponsoring the law--have to conduct a poll and the poll has to be approved by the ["Citizens' Trust"]. And the poll has to have 40% of the people within the relative constituency agreeing to go forward in processing the proposal. That means you're limited by... and the reason why this is very, very important, is that if you're going to have lawmaking it has to have, the individual proposals have to have, sufficient support to be able to qualify it. And then you have another limitation there's only 52 a year at various levels. So, the process, it took me 25 years to figure out how to do this in a most exemplary fashion. Now, Ralph, you mentioned that we have 23

states. Well, that's true. That's the most fundamental change in our structure of government, but it's not enough; we copied Switzerland. And Switzerland makes no distinction between the people and the representative government--it's all one institution. And so, what happens in the states, it's corrupted by the people with money, the one-percenters. Like in California, you want to do an initiative, you've literally got to come up with a million dollars to just get it qualified. So, we can improve upon that and that's what this legislation is--a citizens' amendment. And a Citizens' Legislative Procedures Act, when enacted into law by the people outside of a government, becomes the law of the land.

Ralph Nader: Well, we're talking with former Senator Mike Gravel a two-term Senator from the State of Alaska. And Mike, why don't you tell people how they can get your 2020 platform and the description of The People's Legislature.

Mike Gravel: There are two sites, the one site is mikegravel.org which is run by these kids in Westchester. And there you can get the platform and a lot more. The other is my personal site, which is mikegravel.us. and there you can get a copy of the proposed legislation [and] a host of other articles and comments on the subject. Now I do have a book out and you can get it at mikegravel.us. It's called *Citizen Power: [A People's Platform]*

Ralph Nader: And Gravel spelled G R A V E L. Now you've come up with a wonderful way to thwart Donald J. Trump's accusing the democrats of being socialist and you do it in your typical, fundamental, deliberative manner. And on July 27th, you put out a press release called "What About Republican Socialism?" And you're basically saying, look, if socialism is going to be a topic in the coming-up presidential election, let's not just talk about Democratic Socialism. Let's talk about Republican Socialism. Republican Socialism, as some of our listeners know from our prior programs, is the corporate state crony capitalism. It's Wall Street bailouts. It's the military industrial complex. It's to control the tax system to benefit the few. It's all kinds of subsidies, handouts, giveaways to corporations. It's the control of Washington, D.C. by Wall Street and other giant corporations. It's the control of the electoral process through money and limiting alternative candidates and parties. When you say Democratic Socialism that's full Medicare for All; that's a living wage, education for all, building our public works and repairing them, getting the corruption of money out of politics and

Mike Gravel: Cutting the defense budget in half.

Ralph Nader: That's right, which should be called the war budget, if we used our language properly--the combating climate disruption and so on. That would be a great thing. And you know, Bernie Sanders tiptoed into that area when he once at least said, "Well, Democratic Socialism is better than corporate welfare or corporate socialism". But I like the way you set it up. "Okay, Donald Trump, you're the Trumpeter of Republican Socialism and we're going to hold you accountable and then you can talk all you want about Democratic Socialism, and see how it polls against you overwhelmingly like living wage, cracking down on corporate crime and having universal health care."

What do you think of that idea, Steve and David, as a political strategy?

Steve Skrovan: I think it's great. I mean, I am surprised nobody has taken it up. Somebody who can get on the debate stage should steal it from you, Senator Gravel, because we've talked on this show about corporate socialism, but just calling it Republican Socialism, puts that label on it, that it's going to be hard for them to escape, especially as the way you defined it, Ralph,

Ralph Nader: What do you think, David?

David Feldman: Absolutely. I was reading about JP Morgan and how he saved the economy in the late 19th century, and it was corporate socialism.

Ralph Nader: Senator Gravel are you getting any coverage of this wonderful way to frame the dialogue in the coming months for the presidential election?

Mike Gravel: Well, I get the attention from you and also *Consortium News*. And I sent it to my two campaign managers and asked them to go to Kinko's and get several hundred copies on one-

sheeters, and to go around the debate and pass it out to the people who are at the debate or people that are interested in governance. Now I got it off to Bernie Sanders himself, but I got it off yesterday afternoon, and so I don't know if he's had a chance to absorb it. But you put your finger... the key element is to use the nomenclature of the party, which is the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, and of course, tack on socialism, which is something that Bernie Sanders single-handedly has brought into a positive trend. But in the United States, people are just disparaging of socialism. And there's no reason for it, because socialism in the Scandinavian countries, has been eminently successful. And socialism should not be a negative. All socialism means is we're going to use the tool of government to act in a collective manner on various things that either hurt the people, which of course, is Republican Socialism, or benefit the people, which is Democratic Socialism. And so, there's no reason why we shouldn't concentrate on that. Now, we already have Trump concentrating on that, he's told everybody that anything Democrats are doing is socialist. Well fine, we can accept that, but what we want to do is add the fact that Republicans are equally socialist. The only difference between the two, comparing Democratic Socialism to Republican Socialism is that with Democratic Socialism, the people benefit, and with Republican Socialism, the people get screwed.

Ralph Nader: Well Democratic Socialism historically has been Social Security, Medicare, public libraries, public drinking-water systems, the U.S. Postal Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, almost a thousand municipally owned public utilities. Let Trump campaign against those and see how far he gets. Mike, I think the fundamental problem with everything you're proposing is whether people have sufficient civic self-respect; whether they've given up on themselves too prematurely and massively in terms of running a democratic society. The founders gave us the sovereignty. It starts with "We The People" as you said many times, in the Preamble of the Constitution. The Constitution doesn't say we the corporations or we the Congress, or we the state legislature, it says we the people and never mentions the word company, corporation or political parties.

Mike Gravel: And it says "We The People Do Ordain".

Ralph Nader: That's right.

Mike Gravel: do ordain, "We The People" do ordain. If you take that literally that means that we are the creators of government because we do ordain its existence. Since that's the case, we have the right to change the government to improve it to better satisfy the needs of the present generation.

Ralph Nader: It's the corporate interests that have seized our power. It's the political cronies who have seized our power that comes in the Constitution. Who's the radical here? Who's the extremist here? Who's the revolutionary here? Who's the usurper?

Mike Gravel: The people who deny it, but Ralph, keep in mind that this stealing of the government from the people did not happen today. It happened in the Constitutional Convention, because the convention did not permit the people to participate. The reason why they didn't want the people to participate, is the people would not buy into the concept of slavery. That's the reason. And so, the founders, essentially most of them were slavers, and they did not want the people to

get involved. Now we have every right as “We The People Who Do Ordain” to establish our right to make laws. Law is the central core of civilization, the central core of government. And so, if we’re ever going to bring about any fundamental change, we have to be able to break the monopoly of representative government and bring the people into the only area of government that they can come into and that’s the constituency of a governing body, a Legislature of The People.

Ralph Nader: Mike, for people listening, some of them are probably saying, why do you trust the people so much? Well, first of all, you have a choice. You want to trust big business that has no allegiance to our community and our country as they traverse the world for the cheapest labor and the most bribable dictatorial regimes? Do you want to trust the indentured politicians who have turned our government against their own people as to further their careers in Congress and state legislatures? Or do you trust the people? And if people are still skeptical of that, I say look, we trust civil and criminal juries to make the most fundamental decisions. A criminal jury decides life or death. And we trust ordinary people to be in grand juries and to be in criminal-case juries in court. So, we’ve already manifested our trust in the overall jury system. And we should study that and see how well it’s worked compared to the alternatives; everything is compared to the alternatives.

Mike Gravel: Let me enlarge upon that.

Ralph Nader: Okay, go ahead.

Mike Gravel: That could be stated more succinctly. We are ruled by a minority, a minority of 1%, believe it. So, you have your choice; you can continue to be ruled by the 1% or you can be ruled by the majority of the people on Earth. So, you make a comparison, we’re either ruled by majority or ruled by minority. So, if you want to continue your rule by the minority and be oppressed or turn around and set out the procedures whereby the people can rule themselves. And this would be the first time in history where we would have a government where the people are ruled by the people.

Ralph Nader: And what do you do about dissenting minorities? How do you protect dissenting minorities?

Mike Gravel: You protect the minority by law and majority can protect itself by its very numbers. But if you are a society of laws that is the tool by which you provide the necessary protection to all minorities. Now, we have a rule by the minority right now. And of course, the people aren’t protected. All you got to do is look at your streets see who’s sleeping out there tonight.

Ralph Nader: Steve and David, any comments or questions?

Steve Skrovan: Senator Gravel my son is a fan of yours. He was very excited that you were going to be on the show today. And I asked him if he had any questions. And he said, he’d be interested in how you and the young people, the teens, decided which issues to focus on, what that discussion was like, and how much of it was them and how much was you? And how did you all build upon the policy direction for the campaign?

Mike Gravel: Well, first off when David called me and asked if I would run for president, I retorted by saying, "Do you have any idea how old I am?" He says, "Well, that doesn’t count. What

counts is your views on the issues?" What they did is they had done research on me; they had not heard of me and all of a sudden, I came up in a chat group, and this rang a bell with them. So, they did research on me on when I ran for office, *The Pentagon Papers*, all of that, and developed a list of what they were for. Now, how they really captured me was by putting at the top of the list, creating a Legislature of The People. Well that of course, is what "floats my boat". And this is just a segway, you've heard the cliché "give a person a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish and you feed him for the rest of his life". The same thing is with lawmaking, help somebody get one amendment or get one law enacted fine, but teach them how to make laws and s/he can be a lawmaker for the rest of his or her life. That's essential. Now the development of the platform was interesting. They took all of the issues that they were able to get in the public domain that I have supported, then they would call me on the phone [and] ask me about this. And it was a bunch of kids, they were calling and contacting them and how does Gravel stand on this, stand on that? And so, like they call, how do I stand on the freedom for sex workers? I said, fine. I'm for their freedom. They can make a living like anybody else. And so, it went on from there about literally a month calling me almost every day asking me about this, asking me about that. And as a result of that, put together this whole litany of issues that I subscribe to and that they subscribe to. They were very interesting; they knew that I had a larger body of knowledge than they had. They would make the inquiry as a question and I would respond in a positive way. They didn't come up with any bad legislation; just came up with good legislation, and I would say, "Oh, yeah, I'm for that. I'm for that". And that's how I created the platform that you see at mikegravel.org.

Ralph Nader: They're 18 and 19 year olds, right?

Mike Gravel: Yes. That's exactly right.

Ralph Nader: And what are their names again?

Mike Gravel: David Oks. O K S, and he is 17 years old, going on 18 and Henry Williams; he is 18 and a freshman [who] just finished his freshman year at Columbia.

Ralph Nader: Tell David he drinks too much Coca Cola. Yes, he's got to get on a good diet.

David Feldman: I drink Diet Coke because it has embalming fluid in it; it turns into embalming fluid.

Mike Gravel: That's right. I used to drink Diet Coke till I found out it was just as bad as un-diet Coke.

Ralph Nader: It's quite a remarkable example of a young duo doing this; took a lot of work. And you resisted it and said, "No, no, I'm too old. You know where I am" and this and that, and they kept saying, "No, no, you can do it, you can do it". And you said, "Okay".

Mike Gravel: Well, they could do it; they could do it. All I did was... they were just using what was out there about me. And they did it. They're the ones who did it! They would call me every day [and] give me a report. The only thing that I got involved [with], because they said I had veto power, so the only time I got in and said something was that they were excessively using the F-word on our site. And so, I felt that we should be a little more dignified. I use the F-word privately, but not publicly.

Ralph Nader: They're learning from the wisdom of their elders, I guess

Mike Gravel: The phenomena is that because of them, I am the oldest person running for president in the history of the United States; now that's some kind of a distinction.

Ralph Nader: And the Democratic Party once again, excluded your voice as they excluded eventually, the voice of Congressman Dennis Kucinich and many others that would have invigorated the party and prevented it from losing election after election to the worst Republican Party in history.

David Feldman: I wanted to ask a slightly more global question about your own evolution of thinking, because you've been, obviously we've established, around a long time and in public life for a long time. Can you take us through some of the milestones or some of the breakthrough moments you have had throughout your career that have led you to this incredibly progressive platform? I am imagining, you didn't start here.

Mike Gravel: I got into politics 15 years old, working on people's campaigns. But the most significant point was I was 17 years old and I read a book called *The Anatomy of Peace* by Emory Reves and as a result of reading that book, I then defined myself as a globalist. And even

when I was a senator, I would end some of my speeches saying that, first and foremost, I'm a citizen of the world. Secondly, I'm a citizen of the United States, and third, a citizen of Alaska. And my priorities are in that direction. So, how being a citizen, a human being of the planet, has informed me to overcome the nativism that exists in all of us--that has overcome the sense of injustice, of immorality. Now, I am essentially a secular atheist and as a result of that, I don't need the definition of religion to inform my sense of morality. The sense of morality that I hold is based on common sense and all legislation, if it doesn't make common sense, it should not be enacted into law. And so, the thing that set me on the course of looking differently, at issues--domestically, internationally and locally--was this book by Emory Reves where he makes a [point], very simply and fundamentally, that we are first and foremost citizens of the planet and we should make every effort to conduct ourselves in that regard.

Ralph Nader: You grew up in New England and then you finally went to Alaska. Why don't you tour us there?

Mike Gravel: Well, I'd been in the service, did four years, and I had not completed college. So, when I came back, I worked my way through Columbia--the last two years as a cab driver working on Wall Street. And then, since I had been involved in politics and other people's campaigns since I was a kid, what I did is I had to figure out where to go. My parents were modest and trying to cut your way in politics in Massachusetts as a French, first-generation French-Canadian was somewhat hopeless. You know, the state was ruled by Italians, and the Irish. And so, I did a little research towards the end of my year at Columbia, as to where would be an ideal place to go where I'd have a shot at running for public office. And so, I focused on two States--New Mexico and Alaska. Alaska wasn't even a state, a territory at the time, but you could appreciate that it was going to become a state shortly. So, what I did is I drove a cab in New York, saved enough money to get going; went up to Alaska, got there dead broke, I mean [so] broke I couldn't buy a meal. And so, I got down on a Sunday afternoon and on Monday morning, I was selling real estate in a local office.

And 12 years later, I was sitting in the United States Senate. The message from that is, work hard and be lucky; you have to be lucky. And of course, many times by working hard you make a lot of your luck.

David Feldman: Tell us the story about *The Pentagon Papers* and your involvement in that.

Mike Gravel: [laughter] Well, that's a long story, but I'll try to make it as brief as possible. I was with Mark Hatfield [Republican Senator: Oregon] and we were going to wage a filibuster to force the end of the draft which was going to expire at the end of June, and unbeknownst to us Mike Mansfield [Democratic Senator: Montana], set it up that our filibuster was operating on a two-track system, where

David Feldman: He was the Senate Majority Leader at the time?

Mike Gravel: Yeah, the majority leader at that time.

Ralph Nader: What year was this?

Mike Gravel: This was 1971. And so, he set it up on a two-track system where all we had to do was show up during consideration of the Military Authorization Act. And of course, Mark didn't have to get involved because it wasn't all that difficult a task. That, started in May. In June, *The New York Times* came out with *The Pentagon Papers*, and that was a total consternation. And so, what happened is Ellsberg, who is the one that did this, lost faith in *The New York Times* because of the delays involved, so he contacted my office and asked me if I would release *The Pentagon Papers* as part of my filibuster against the draft. And I said yes, and waited for another call. And eventually, Ben Bagdikian who was editor at *The [Washington] Post*, got me a copy of *The Pentagon Papers*. But unfortunately, through a device of my own making, we failed, and so the young attorneys that I had in my office at the time, came up with plan B, and plan B was to use my position, as Chairman of the Building and Grounds, to call an emergency meeting, and within that meeting, to go ahead and release *The Pentagon Papers*, and of course, we did that, and as a result, they became in the public record of the subcommittee, which is the record of the Senate, and which means that it made moot the decision of the court same day. The court ruled that you could not continue with prior restraint. But they said that if you did publish, you would be subject to the Espionage Act. Well, lo and behold, they stopped publishing, and I went around trying to get somebody to publish the papers and was not able to get anybody except *Beacon Press*, that had a donation anonymously from somebody on Long Island, to go ahead and print the papers, and so the papers became known/were printed as the Gravel edition of *The Pentagon Papers*. Then Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn contacted me and asked if they could add an additional small volume, which would explain *The Pentagon Papers*. And of course, I said, yes, and so the official record of *The Pentagon Papers* is five volumes and the last volume was put together by Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky.

Ralph Nader: Listen Mike, just tell our listeners what *The Pentagon Papers* were, in case they're not familiar.

Mike Gravel: Oh, the fact that they were secret is terrible. Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, who was getting religion a little bit at the end of his tenure, commissioned a study to find

out how the hell we got into this mess in Vietnam. So, the study was done. Ellsberg was part of this study. So was Dr. Rothberg - who was my editor - was part of the study. And so, he did this study, read it, so arrogantly as a bureaucrat, then classified it and put it on the shelf. Well, hell, if it was important for McNamara to know how we got into this mess, it was doubly important for the American people to know that. And that's what eventually Ellsberg came to realize. And then when Ellsberg released it--I had been in the Army and went to OCS [Officer Candidate School], at [Fort] Benning, Georgia as a Combat Infantry Platoon Leader. Well, on the patch of their shirt was the slogan "Follow Me". Well, I envisioned when Ellsberg released this with great courage, I said, "Well, God, he's going up the hill, and I should follow *him*." And so, when he called it didn't take me a second, not a second to decide that I should release because it is very simple. When I was 23 years old, I was the adjutant of the communications intelligence service, where

we wiretapped and opened people's mail wantonly in Europe. And so, I had a knowledge of how the deep state operated. And so when he asked me if I would release *The Pentagon Papers*, I said in a heartbeat, I would and that's how it proceeded to release the papers. And the papers were not secret. They were just a history of how four presidential administrations lied to the American people - wantonly lied to the people - as to what was going on in Southeast Asia, where we killed 58,000 Americans and 3 million Southeast Asians.

David Feldman: Can you explain to me the rights that a senator has entering documents into *The Congressional Record*? Were *The Pentagon Papers* printed in *The Congressional Record* or not?

Mike Gravel: No, no, they were not. Here's the process: I put them into the record of the subcommittee; however, they were now essentially de facto in the Senate record. But the Senate's not going to print my version of *The Pentagon Papers*. That's the reason why I had to go to the private sector to get them printed.

David Feldman: Why wouldn't they print your version?

Mike Gravel: Well, because they thought that this was secret. Most people think that well, it's all the president's fault of all this crazy secrecy. Hell, no. It's as crazy in the Congress, as it is in the presidency. Here, the sanctions done in other countries, well, they're put in place by the Congress as they are by the presidency. The same thing with the secrecy. And that is, when you can classify, when you could hold secrets, you feel superior to the people who don't know what the secret is. And that's the mental attitude that exists in many members of Congress. You just had that recently, with all this element with the Mueller Report. The Mueller Report should have been totally, totally released to the public. Of course, it was not; it was redacted wantonly and the Congress does this all the time; they go into special session. I would say, based upon my experience as a Top Secret Control Officer - when I was twenty-four years old, mind you - that 80% of what's held secret in the United States should not be held secret. The only benefit of that is to be able to keep the American people uninformed as to what their government is doing. And if a democracy is to succeed, it has to inform the people so that the people can have their views felt on public policy. And that's not what goes on today. And so that's the reason why we don't have a democracy under our present structure. We have a system of representative government; we have a monopoly on lawmaking, and have a monopoly on setting up as much secrecy as they choose.

Ralph Nader: David, just another dimension of what Senator Gravel did: he actually read for three hours as the Chair of the Committee; he read the contents of *The Pentagon Papers* with the press all over it. Is that correct?

Mike Gravel: Yes, it is. And, and of course, at one point, I started sobbing, because I was so ashamed of what our country was doing. And then my staff person, Joe Rothstein, who you couldn't see from the video, who was kneeling down next me says, "Well, Senator, why don't you just dump it in the record?" And then I woke up immediately and said, "Oh, yeah, I could do

that". I asked unanimous consent to place these papers into the record of the Committee, and I slammed the gavel down so ordered. There was nobody to object. And so now, you'll laugh; Jennings Randolph, [West VA Democrat] who was Chairman of the full Committee--we had a "come to Jesus" meeting where I had to show up at the Committee meeting, and he harangued me as to how dare I do what I did. And Lowell Weicker, who was the ranking Republican on my Committee, said, "Well, you know, I wasn't there. I wasn't party to it, but I'm going to pay half the cost of printing." And so, they did, since it was recorded. So, we each had to pony up \$200, and Lowell insisted that he would pay his share. So we put up each \$200. And then it was printed in the subcommittee record, the committee record. Well, that was automatic. Now, if you wanted to make it available to the public, which we did, the night that we released it, we released the papers to a pool of reporters, who then copied it, and then released it to the various institutions. Well, this very act made moot by the Supreme Court decision, and the decision of the Congress not to print the papers. Now, the Defense Department two weeks before our papers were published, they did release the *Papers*, which will give you an idea how ridiculous it was to classify them in the first place. But that didn't go anywhere. It was our *Papers* that were official, and the rest is history. But what it really showed--and this is no different today, whether it's Obama, whether it's Bush, whether it's Trump-- that the government lies to people just as a matter of course, and that Congress joins in that lying process so that they can maintain their power.

Ralph Nader: In closing, tell our listeners, again, how they can get your 2020 platform and your estimable work on fundamental democracy.

Mike Gravel: Well, the first one is for the platform is the platform that is controlled by the kids—that's what I call these fellows. And that is mikegravel.org. They have my Twitter account; I don't tweet and they have my Twitter account. That's how they hand out the basic communications. The other is my personal site, which is mikegravel.us and that's a site where you can order the book *Citizen Power*. And also, you can see the text of the legislation I'm talking about. But I'm coming out with a new book, which essentially, is a detailed manual on how to bring about a Legislature of The People, and the title of the book says it all, *Human Governance: The Failure of Representative Government and a Solution – The People*. And the choice is simple; you either can be ruled by a minority or you can be ruled by a majority. Presently we were ruled by a minority and that is the reason why everything is so dysfunctional.

Ralph Nader: The 1% of Republican Socialism ruling instead of the vast majority behind Democratic Socialism. And that doesn't mean you don't have private enterprise. It doesn't mean you have government ownership of all means of production. It's much more sophisticated, much more rooted in our history. Thank you very much for proposing a future of engagement by all

people, Mike Gravel, two-term Senator from Alaska, and a leading advocate on fundamental reform of our society. Thank you, Mike.

Mike Gravel: Thank you Ralph for having me on. And thank you for your continuous support.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Mike Gravel, former Senator from Alaska who was running for President in 2020. We will link to his campaign at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Now we're going to take a short break and check in with our *Corporate Crime Reporter*, Russell Mohkiber. You are listening to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, back after this.

Russell Mohkiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, August 9, 2019. I'm Russell Mohkiber. A Pennsylvania woman said she will never be the same after walking her dog four years ago, and being partially blinded by a defective collar she purchased on Amazon. Her case against the online shopping giant could eventually lead to big changes to a crucial 1996 law that protects the tech industry from liability claims. That's according to a report from *Market Watch*. A Third Circuit Court of Appeals panel voted two-to-one to reinstate Heather Oberdorf's products liability lawsuit against Amazon for a dog collar that suddenly snapped apart. The \$18.48 collar's ring broke and the retractable leash sprang back into Heather Oberdorf's left eye while she was walking her 70-pound dog, Sadie, in January 2015. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

Steve Skrovan: For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call the *Wrap Up*. A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you everybody. You want power over your two senators and representatives go to ratsreformcongress.org and see how to build it.