

Mike Gravel Issues Paper

IRAQ WAR

Senator Gravel's position on Iraq remains clear and consistent: to commence an immediate and orderly withdrawal of all U.S. troops that will have them home within 120 days.

The sooner U.S. troops are withdrawn, the sooner we can pursue aggressive diplomacy to bring an end to the civil war that currently consumes Iraq.

Senator Gravel seeks to work with neighboring Arab countries to lead a collective effort to bring peace to Iraq.

One of the leading opponents of the Vietnam War, Senator Gravel was one of the first current or former elected officials to publicly oppose the planned invasion of Iraq in 2002. He appeared on MSNBC prior to the invasion insisting that intelligence showed that there were indeed no weapons of mass destruction, that Iraq posed no threat to the United States and that invading Iraq was against America's national interests and would result in a disaster of epic proportions for both the United States and the Iraqi people.

Today, more than four years into the invasion, the death toll of U.S. troops has climbed over 3,800 with over 50,000 more permanently maimed, some having lost limbs, others their sight. Tens of thousands more are afflicted with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and urgently need psychological care.

The Iraqi civilian death toll nears a million souls, and still there remains no end in sight to the bloodshed.

As President, Senator Gravel will call for a U.S. corporate withdrawal from Iraq and hand over reconstruction contracts to Iraqi businesses which will empower Iraqi nationals to reconstruct their own country.

IRAN

Senator Gravel firmly opposes a military confrontation with Iran and advocates a diplomatic solution to the current situation.

Several signs indicate that the Bush administration is moving towards a military confrontation with Iran and Syria; the deployment of a "major strike group" of ships to the Persian Gulf, the detaining of six Iranian officials of a consular office flying the Iranian flag, pointed accusations that both nations are fueling the insurgency in Iraq and the President's remarks that the U.S. would disrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria to those insurgents.

The threat of war against another sovereign nation while wars continue to rage in Iraq, the Palestinian Authority and Afghanistan, only serves to further threaten global stability.

The National Initiative for Democracy

A POPULIST CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

“Let the People Decide”

The central power of government in a democracy is lawmaking — not voting. Those who make the laws determine how, when, and if voters can vote. Florida and Ohio are but recent examples. Governments throughout history have been tools of oppression; they need not be. American citizens can gain control of their government by becoming lawmakers and turning its purpose to public benefit, and stemming government growth—the people are more conservative than their elected officials regardless of political party.

Are the people qualified enough to make laws directly to govern their lives? They’re qualified enough on Election Day to give their power away to political candidates who manipulate the electoral process to get elected. In fact, it’s easier to decide one’s self-interest directly than it is to guess the mind of a representative who will naturally put his or her self-interest first.

More than 70% of the voters already make laws by initiative in twenty-four states and in numerous local communities, and when voting on bond issues referred to them for decision by their representatives—serious lawmaking. American voters have made laws for the last 100 years and their record is as good as their elected legislators—with respect to fiscal matters, the people’s record is far superior.

How do Americans become lawmakers? The Congress is not likely to dilute its power by empowering the people as lawmakers. Therefore, the people themselves must enact the National Initiative for Democracy, a proposed law that empowers them as lawmakers.

The National Initiative is a legislative package sponsored by The Democracy Foundation (www.nationalinitiative.us) a non-profit IRS 501 C (3) corporation that includes an Amendment to the Constitution and a Federal Statute.

The Democracy Amendment

- 1) amends the Constitution asserting the legislative powers of the people,
- 2) sanctions the national election conducted by the nonprofit corporation Philadelphia II, giving Americans the opportunity to vote on the National Initiative,
- 3) creates an Electoral Trust (vital to maintain citizen lawmaking independent of representatives) and defines the role of its trustees, and
- 4) outlaws the use of monies not from natural persons in initiative elections.

The Democracy Act is a proposed federal statute that

- 1) sets out deliberative legislative procedures (copied from Congress) to be used for initiative lawmaking by citizens in every government jurisdiction of the United States,
- 2) defines the limited powers of the Electoral Trust that administers the legislative procedures on behalf of the people, and
- 3) defines the electoral threshold that must be reached for the National Initiative to become the law of the land. It is important to understand that the National Initiative does not alter the existing structure or powers of representative governments. Rather, it adds an additional Check — the People — to our system of Checks and Balances, while setting up a working partnership between the people and their elected representatives.

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How can American voters amend the Constitution and enact the National Initiative if Congress opposes it? The people must go around all three branches of government to amend the Constitution.

There are only two venues within our government structure where constitutions, constitutional amendments, and laws can be enacted into law: the people or their elected representatives.

The Framers in Article 7 of the Constitution provided a procedure for We, the People to ratify the Constitution and thereby create our government, but failed to provide procedures for the people to alter the Constitution, even though they repeatedly said the people had the right to change their government as they saw fit.

However, the Framers did provide amending procedures for themselves in Article V, thereby perpetuating control of government by elites.

Conventional wisdom now holds that Article V is the only way to amend the Constitution. Article V is how the government amends the Constitution, not how the people do it. If the people had to use Article V to amend the Constitution they would need permission from two-thirds of the Congress and three-fourths of the state legislatures. This would mean that the creator of our government, the people, would have to get permission from their elected representatives, the createes of the people, to amend the Constitution. This logic is ludicrous. The constituent power of the people—the source of all political power—cannot be subject to the power of its creation.

James Madison had it right when he said that the people could just do it. The people can amend the Constitution and make laws as long as the process they employ is fair, transparent and reasonable. The National Initiative, the ongoing people's legislative procedures, is just that and the national election conducted by Philadelphia II to enact the National Initiative under the precedent of Article 7 is fair, transparent and reasonable.

Today's communication technology permits us to ask all American citizens if they wish to be empowered as lawmakers and if a majority of voters who voted in the last presidential election so affirm—regardless of the view of those in government—then the National Initiative becomes the law of the land.

If Americans wish to be empowered as lawmakers and truly have a government “by the People” they must go to the Democracy Foundation's web site: www.nationalinitiative.us to learn about the National Initiative and to the Philadelphia II linked site: www.votep2.us to vote. Please support the effort with a tax deductible contribution.

Fair Tax

MIKE GRAVEL IS FOR REAL TAX REFORM:

- **ABOLISH THE INCOME TAX AND THE IRS**
- **SET UP A PROGRESSIVE SALES TAX**

It's called a FAIR TAX.

The way in which a government raises revenue is a critical indication of how fair it will be to its citizens.

The U.S. Income Tax system is unfair to its citizens and crippling to the economy. Both the Income Tax and the Sales Tax systems are generically progressive:

- with Income, you're taxed on what you earn;
- with Sales, you're taxed on what you spend.

But the U.S. Income Tax system is unfair and regressive because Americans earning less than \$97,400 pay a larger portion of their income in taxes than those who earn more than \$97,400.

The following applies to both Income and Sales tax systems:

- To be fair, a tax system must have total transparency—each taxpayer must know what s/he is paying and what everyone else is paying.
- To be fair, a tax system cannot have any exceptions. One exception opens the door to those who can afford to game the system.
- To be fair, a tax system must be simple. The more complex it is, the easier it is to game the system.

Our income tax code is riddled with exceptions and incentives that the 30,000 lobbyists in Washington have secured and continue to secure for their clients. Little wonder the code is incomprehensible and has a compliance cost to the private sector of \$270 billion a year.

After serving eight years on the Senate Finance Committee, my choice to meet the fairness criteria is to junk the income tax with all its exceptions, close the IRS, and establish a sales tax—without exceptions.

Much demagoguery swirls around issues of taxation:

- “Soak the rich” is one approach, but it never happens regardless of whether the liberals or conservatives hold political power. The wealthy have the money to game the system.
- “Tax the corporations” is another approach, but corporate taxes are built into the cost of products or services, so consumers are actually paying those taxes, too. It's a hidden sales tax.

I subscribe to a sales tax system, most of which is included in what is called the Fair Tax. The Fair Tax meets the fairness criteria: simplicity, transparency and no exceptions.

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What sales tax rate will be applied to all new products and services? The goal is to keep tax reform revenue-neutral. It is not a tax-cut program. Whatever the tax rate on new goods and services that will produce the same amount of money currently raised by the income tax is the sales tax rate. Best estimates indicate that the rate would be somewhere between 20 and 25%. Also, best estimates indicate that it would take a year to transition from one system to the other.

The PREBATE

One of the most exciting features of the Fair Tax is the monthly payments to individuals and/or families to reimburse them for the tax they pay on the essentials of life (food, shelter, clothing, medicine).

The amount of the **Prebate** is calculated by multiplying the cost of essentials by the tax rate. The resulting tax is divided into 12 equal payments and sent on the first of each month to consumers who have registered annually for the program. The progressiveness of the Fair Tax can be determined by adjusting the amounts selected for the prices paid for essentials, which should not be taxed in the first place. However, giving these essentials an exception from the sales tax opens the door for wealth to game the system and we are back with the problems we have in the income tax system.

The Congress will never enact such a radical reform because it dilutes their power to control and focus the economy to accomplish social goals and, of course, limits the ability of Congress to reward their special-interest friends who donate money to their political campaigns. In my judgment, Americans will have to vote to enact the National Initiative (www.nationalinitiative.us), becoming legislators like their elected lawmakers, in order to make the Fair Tax the law of the land.

Fair Tax Facts

Taxes you on what you spend—not on what you earn. So American consumers with low or moderate incomes will automatically pay less in taxes.

Government revenues from individuals are presently funded by payroll deductions from 110 million workers, and from corporate taxes. Under the Fair Tax, government revenues will be funded by more than 300 million consumers, including visiting tourists, and tax cheats who previously reported little or nothing to the IRS.

Eliminates federal deductions on your paycheck for income taxes, Social Security and Medicare.

Social Security and Medicare will be fully funded by the Fair Tax.

Restores individual privacy. The government no longer needs to know where you work, what you earn, or what you do with your earnings.

Saves up to \$270 billion per year that federal tax compliance currently costs our economy. Dramatically reduces the price of new products and services, estimated at 20-25%, because corporations no longer need to hide these costs in the retail prices that are now passed on to consumers. This reduction equals the present income taxes being paid.

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Creates jobs and economic growth in the U.S. by reducing operating costs to companies.

Encourages international investment in the American economy.

Businesses, and state and local governments collecting the sales tax will keep a small percentage to reimburse themselves for the cost of collecting and forwarding the funds to the U.S. Treasury.

Encourages the re-use of products and the purchase of tax-free, pre-owned products.

Changes our *consumption-based economy to a savings-based economy*, warding off the oncoming fiscal crisis over commercial and private debt.

Saves about 300,000 trees each year that are currently needed to produce all the paperwork for IRS compliance and tax forms.

Makes U.S. goods more competitive overseas and more affordable at home, thereby increasing job creation while reducing our balance of payments deficit.

Eliminates corporate taxes and the costs of compliance. These costs are currently hidden in the price consumers pay for the company's product or services.

Changes the American economy – the largest economic entity in the world – into the largest tax haven in the world, enticing international investments in the American economy.

Also creates a level of growth (estimated at 10%) and prosperity that will permit the nation to lower government debt and balance the budget, better finance education, health care, transportation, and the rebuilding of our national infrastructure.

GLOBAL WARMING/CLIMATE CHANGE

Global climate change must be made an issue of national security. We must act swiftly to reduce America's carbon footprint in the world by passing legislation that caps emissions. By putting a hard cap on greenhouse gas emissions we will improve energy efficiency while generating energy from low-carbon sources. This is critical. Both of these pathways provide lasting benefits from the economic and environmental perspectives. Improved energy efficiency reduces energy costs and makes American-made products more competitive. Growth in the renewable energy technology market creates good-paying, stable jobs in a growing industrial sector. America can become an exporter again if we have the correct visionary policy.

However, any legislation will have little impact on the global environment if we do not work together with other global polluters. Fighting global warming can only be effective if it is a collective global effort. As President, Senator Gravel will see that the U.S. launches and leads a massive global scientific effort to end energy dependence on oil and integrate the world's scientific community to this task.

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IMMIGRATION

Senator Gravel favors protecting our borders and monitoring the flow of illegal immigrants into our country. He also favors a guest worker program and setting up naturalization procedures that would fairly bring existing illegal immigrants into legal status.

The senator's position is that America must address the root cause of illegal immigration. Any discussion of Mexican immigration must include NAFTA and the concept of "free trade." The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been a disaster for the working class of both the US and Mexico. A study by the Economic Policy Institute found that over 1,000,000 US jobs were lost as a result of NAFTA, a third of them manufacturing jobs. In Mexico, 1.3 million farm workers lost their jobs in the same period. This has led to a wave of immigrant workers looking for work in the US job market.

Major structural changes must be made to NAFTA in order to restore lost jobs. Reforming unfair trade policies will stimulate job growth on both sides of the border and allow Mexican workers to remain in their motherland. We must make fair trade a priority if we are to rebuild the American middle class.

LGBT RIGHTS

Senator Gravel supports same-sex marriage and opposes the Defense of Marriage Act. In the absence of full marriage rights, the senator supports domestic partner benefits for all Americans.

He supports expanding hate-crime legislation and opposes laws that allow discrimination against sexual orientation, as well as discrimination on the basis of one's gender identity or expression.

He strongly opposes the military's 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' legislation on the grounds that it is unconstitutional, as it restricts the rights of gay Americans, and he opposes any state or national constitutional amendment that restricts the rights of the LGBT community.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Senator Mike Gravel wants to put real money, rather than borrowed money, in the Social Security Trust Fund, investing it properly and identifying the interests of individual beneficiaries so they can leave their surplus funds to their heirs.

He also calls on Congress to stop raiding the Social Security Trust Fund. This is key to ensuring that Social Security will be around long after the Baby Boomers are gone for the next generation of Americans who have paid into it.

UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE VOUCHERS

Senator Gravel advocates a National Health Care Voucher plan that will give every American health care. Using a voucher paid for by the government, Americans will remain free to choose their own doctor

Medicine and medical technology in the United States is the finest in the world. However, it is also one of the leading causes of bankruptcies. With the rising cost of health care, it is time to rethink our approach.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Senator Mike Gravel enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1951 and served for three years as an adjutant in the Communications Services and as a Special Agent in the Counter Intelligence Corps.

Our war veterans are not, as some would have it, a “special interest” but are our primary interest.

As President, Sen. Gravel would ensure that veterans receive full and unambiguous funding for their most important needs, including health care that is indexed to the increasing cost of care and medicine.

He would also make permanent the 100 percent disability ratings of those diagnosed as suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

He would also make sure that the VA system is fully financed and has sufficient well-trained personnel to provide the finest care that is available. As the senator says, “We can do no less and will do much more.”

EDUCATION

No Child Left Behind has left far too many children behind. We have a dire situation in America; 30% of our kids do not graduate from high school. Nearly a third of our children are condemned to a substandard economic existence. Education in America must be properly funded. However, money will not solve all the problems. Washington D.C. ranks first in dollars spent, yet ranks last in achievement.

We need to approach education comprehensively.

We must properly fund education while raising the overall standard of living in America and making education a vital part of a healthy, thriving community.

PRISON/DRUG REFORM

The United States incarcerates more people and at a higher rate than any other peacetime nation in the world. According to the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics the number of US residents behind bars has now reached more than 2.3 million.

We are losing an entire generation of young men and women to our prisons. Our nation's ineffective and wasteful "war on drugs" plays a major role in this. We must place a greater emphasis on rehabilitation and prevention.

We must de-criminalize minor drug offenses and increase the availability and visibility of substance abuse treatment and prevention in our communities as well as in jails and prisons.

We must increase the use of special drug courts in which addicted offenders are given the opportunity to complete court supervised substance abuse treatment instead of being sentenced to prison.

We must eliminate mandatory minimum sentencing laws.

We must increase the use of alternative penalties for nonviolent drug offenders. Drug defendants convicted of nonviolent offenses should not be given mandatory prison sentences.

We should emphasize the criminalization of the importers, manufacturers, and major distributors, rather than just the street vendors. Prison in this country should be a legitimate criminal sanction -- but it should be an extension of a fair, just and wise society.

2ND AMENDMENT RIGHTS

While Senator Gravel fully supports the 2nd Amendment, he believes that fundamental change must take place with regards to gun ownership.

The senator advocates a licensing program where a potential gun owner must be licensed as well as properly trained with a firearm before they may own one.