

Gabriel Saravia - An American Success Story

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

Kodiak is such a diverse place that it's no wonder so many people take a long and winding road to get here. Perhaps no one has had a longer road than Kodiak City Councilman Gabriel Saravia, who's gone from being an illegal immigrant to having a seat on the city's ruling body. KMXT's Casey Kelly has more.

Gabriel Saravia first came to the United States in 1978, a 16-year-old kid with a second grade education.

1 (Saravia :20s "...until the time I'm 19.")

He read a newspaper article in Indiana that said there was a lot of work in Alaska, so in April 1981 he packed his things and boarded a plane to Juneau.

2 (Saravia :25s "...\$5.80 an hour on the line.")

Saravia has worked at Western Alaska Fisheries ever since. He's now the personnel and production manager at the plant, and says the company has treated him well. He says it was a lot easier in the late '70s and early '80s for an illegal immigrant to find work.

3 (Saravia :27s "...American citizen in 1992.")

He says becoming an American citizen is one of the proudest moments of his life.

4 (Saravia :16s "...I gonna be die here.")

In 1986, the same year he got his green card, Saravia married his first wife. Ten years later he got divorced, but took custody of their two children. He just took his oldest son to college in Oregon. Now he lives with his fiancé and together they have two children.

5 (Saravia :15s "...the two new ones we have now.")

He credits Kodiak Mayor Carolyn Floyd and her husband Joe for helping him out along the way. She was the one who urged him to get his GED at Kodiak College and later told him that he should run for the city council.

6 (Saravia :18s "...five years ago they convinced me to run.")

Mayor Floyd says she's proud of all that Saravia has accomplished.

(Floyd 1 :11s "...I'm very proud of him for
doing that.")

She adds
that he represents an important demographic in Kodiak's diverse community.

(Floyd 2 :15s "...Hispanics that live in our
community.")

Saravia says he's proud to
represent all the citizens of Kodiak, regardless of race or background. The
most important thing to him, he says, is making sure Kodiak's economy stays
strong and there's enough work in the local canneries for everyone who wants a
job. But he admits it's not always easy to please everyone.

(Saravia 7 :32s "...and representations of the
people.")

For the past year Saravia has
served as the city's deputy mayor, representing the city at events and running
meetings when Mayor Floyd is out of town. He says he hasn't decided yet whether
he'll seek a third term on the council when his current tenure ends next year.
But he plans to stay active in the community, and the 46-year-old says he has
no plans to retire from his job at Western.

I'm Casey Kelly.

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