

10.20.2025 Mayor Speech on The Contributions of Immigrants and Refugees

Good evening,

In Wilsonville, we've made an intentional choice to become a City of Belonging. It's a shared commitment — not just a slogan. It reflects the kind of community we are choosing to build together: one where every person has the chance to contribute, to feel safe, and to be valued for who they are.

[Pause for translation]

Tonight, I want to honor our immigrant and refugee communities — not as a footnote to Wilsonville's story, but as a central part of it. Here in Oregon, Latino families have for generations helped build and sustain the communities we call home — working in agriculture, construction, education, health care, and small businesses. Their contributions are woven deeply into the story of this state and this city.

[Pause for translation]

Immigrants and refugees as a whole (Pause and Look Up) bring with them languages, food, art, faith, celebrations, and histories that enrich the soul of our city. They teach all of us, most notably through our dual language program for our children. They make Wilsonville a place where many cultures don't just live side by side — they connect, share, and grow together.

[Pause for translation]

When we gather at cultural festivals, in schools, places of worship, parks, and around kitchen tables, we see a community woven from many stories. That richness — that mix of traditions and perspectives — gives Wilsonville its heart.

[Pause for translation]

And yes, our immigrant and refugee neighbors also strengthen Wilsonville in practical ways. They are part of the workforce that keeps our economy moving — in logistics, manufacturing, healthcare, education, agriculture, and through small businesses that create jobs and opportunity. But their cultural and civic contributions are not just an asset — they are a foundation of the community we are building.

This is what belonging looks like: not erasing differences, but embracing them as sources of strength.

[Pause for translation]

I've (Pause and look up) heard real fear from families worried by reports of immigration enforcement in our city and the region. While those actions may target specific individuals, the fear they stir ripples outward. It reaches first-generation Americans, permanent residents, communities of color, LGBTQ+ neighbors — people who know how fragile a sense of belonging can feel when fear enters the picture.

[Pause for translation]

And when that moment came early last week, Wilsonville didn't look away. Community members — neighbors, parents, and local leaders — sprang into action to support one another. Our

schools responded swiftly and clearly, making sure families knew their children were safe and supported.

It wasn't just one voice — it was many. That's who we are as a community.

[Pause for translation]

Moments like that remind us that belonging isn't just words — it's something we live together.

I see people on social media say “If you haven't broken the law, you have nothing to fear.” But history shows us that's not true for everyone.

[Pause for translation]

Some of the darkest chapters in history remind us that fear doesn't just arise from breaking the law — it can be created when the law itself is written and enforced to target people.

[Pause for translation]

Throughout our nation's history, laws have been passed that explicitly targeted immigrants and communities of color: laws that barred Irish and Asian immigrants, excluded Chinese laborers, punished Japanese Americans during World War II, and denied Black Americans their most basic rights. And beyond our borders, history shows us where such laws can lead — as in Nazi Germany, where fear was not just tolerated but engineered through the law itself.

[Pause for translation]

These laws weren't passed in calm times. They were passed during wars, economic crises, and periods of deep national division — moments when fear and uncertainty too often became an excuse to turn against those who were seen as “different.”

[Pause for translation]

So (Pause and look up) when some of our neighbors feel uneasy today, that's not imagined. It's remembered. It's rooted in the knowledge that the law has not always protected everyone equally — and that fear often finds its way into policy when a nation is under stress.

[Pause for translation]

Wilsonville's commitment to belonging does not waver in the face of fear. I may not control federal actions, but as Mayor, I can speak clearly about who we are and what we stand for:

We stand for safety.

We stand for dignity.

We stand for respect.

We stand for community.

[Pause for translation]

No one in Wilsonville should have to look over their shoulder to feel safe. No family should feel they must shrink from public life. No child should wonder whether their language, their heritage, or their identity puts them at risk.

[Pause for translation]

To our immigrant and refugee neighbors:
You belong here.
Your cultures enrich our shared life.
Your contributions make this city stronger.
And your presence is part of Wilsonville's future.
Belonging isn't just a vision. It defines who we are as a
community.
Many cultures. One heart. One Wilsonville.
[Pause for translation]
Thank you.