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Anaheim council candidate switches political parties

Muslim candidate becomes a Democrat after criticism from Republican Party leaders.

By SARAH TULLY
The Orange County Register

SANTA ANA – An Anaheim City Council candidate, who is Arab-American and Muslim, switched today to the Democratic Party after facing criticism by Republican leaders.

Candidate Bill Dalati, a Syrian immigrant, said he believes he is targeted because of his religion and ethnicity.

Shawn Steel, immediate past president of the state Republican Party, circulated a letter calling Dalati an "extremist" for his participation in Council on American-Islamic Relations issues and a donation to Democratic U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney of Georgia. The local party also refused to endorse Dalati for the nonpartisan race.

"The Democrats can use people like that. That's why they are going to continue losing elections," Steel said today, adding that his statements are unrelated to Dalati's religion and ethnicity.

Dalati said he decided to change parties before the election in a city where Republicans make up the largest voting bloc.

"People need to know who they are voting for," Dalati said. "I know this is going to hurt me, but it's the right thing to do."

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