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News

Posted on Thu, Nov. 02, 2006

Council candidate switches parties

ANAHEIM (AP) - A City Council candidate accused of supporting Islamic extremists by a powerful GOP operative switched his party affiliation Wednesday, becoming a registered Democrat.

Belal "Bill" Dalati, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Syria, was criticized in a letter last month by former state Republican Party chairman Shawn Steel.

Dalati said he tried unsuccessfully to speak to GOP officials about the letter, which accused Dalati of helping sponsor an anti-Israel rally and associating with "zany left-wing groups." The City Council is a nonpartisan office.

"They didn't even take the opportunity to give me a phone call and say, 'OK, that's not what the Republican Party stands for,'" Dalati said after turning in his new registration. "I didn't feel wanted by the Republican Party."

An after-hours call to Scott Baugh, chairman of the Orange County Republican Party, was not returned. The local group did not endorse Dalati in the race.

Dalati, an insurance agent, said the rally mentioned in the letter was an anti-war protest and denied ties to Hezbollah. He plans to continue his bid for a council seat.

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