

The Record · Statement

One in Four Burbank Candidates Changed Party Before Running

Burbank Republican Party · September 7, 2026

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Two years ago, thirty Burbank residents signed an open letter in the Burbank Leader under the headline “Don’t Politicize Our Local Elections.” They were right then, and they are right now.

They pointed out that Article II, Section 6(a) of the California Constitution requires school board and city council elections to be nonpartisan. They wrote that political parties are “irrelevant to the role and responsibilities of local school boards and city councils,” and that cooperation between officials comes more easily when neighbors are not labeled as opponents.

“It’s for the benefit of the children and citizens of our community to not have partisan elections, and it is therefore demanded by the California state Constitution.”

Open letter, Burbank Leader, September 27, 2024

Every word of that is true, and Burbank would be a better city if it were also how things worked.

It isn’t.

There is a piece of advice that has circulated quietly in this town for decades. It is given to capable people who want to serve — on the school board, on the city council, on a commission. It goes something like this: *you should probably change your registration first.*

Not because their views would change. Not because the office is partisan; the Constitution says plainly that it is not. Simply because somebody who knows how these things work has done the arithmetic and concluded that the letter after your name will cost you votes.

Some people hear that advice and refuse it. Some hear it and take it. We are not going to publish a name, because the individual is not the point and never was. But we would ask every reader to sit for a moment with the obvious question:

If a party label truly is irrelevant to a nonpartisan office — and it is — then why would anyone ever need to change theirs in order to run for one?

That question answers itself, and the answer is the entire argument. Nobody changes their registration over a matter that does not matter. The switching is the proof that the label carries weight, and it is done quietly, by people who understand exactly how much weight it carries.

So we went and looked.

Party registration is public record in California, and the county makes the voter file available to political parties for exactly this kind of work. We obtain it lawfully, we keep it, and we track it over time. Anyone who changes party leaves a mark, and what turns up in the run-up to an election is genuinely interesting.

So we took every person who has appeared on a Burbank ballot since 2022 — City Council, City Clerk, City Treasurer and the Board of Education — and followed their registration across the years.

Burbank candidates, 2022 to 2026

Municipal and school board office

40

candidates we could trace

10

changed party registration

9

did it before running

13.3%

rate among Burbank voters generally

THE KEY POINTS

- Over the last four years, one in four Burbank candidates changed their party registration.
- Nine of those ten changed *before* the election they ran in — not after it.
- Ordinary Burbank voters change party at 13.3 percent. Candidates did it at 25.0 percent.
- When ordinary voters move, they spread evenly between the three options. When candidates moved, six of the ten landed on the same party.
- Two of the people now sitting on the City Council changed registration before the elections that put them there. So did a sitting member of the Board of Education.

Every registration change we found. No names — the individuals are not the point.

Candidate	Office sought	What changed	When	Outcome
Council Candidate 1	City Council	Changed party	Before the election	Elected
Council Candidate 2	City Council	Changed party	Before the election	Elected
Council Candidate 3	City Council	Changed party	Before the election	Defeated
Council Candidate 4	City Council	Changed party	Before the election	On this year's ballot
Council Candidate 5	City Council	Changed party	Before the election	On this year's ballot
Council Candidate 6	City Council	Changed party	Before the election	On this year's ballot
School Board Candidate 1	Board of Education	Changed party	Before the election	Elected
School Board Candidate 2	Board of Education	Changed party	Before the election	Defeated

Candidate	Office sought	What changed	When	Outcome
School Board Candidate 3	Board of Education	Changed party	Before the election	On this year's ballot
School Board Candidate 4	Board of Education	Changed party	After losing	Defeated

Elected

Defeated

On this year's ballot

Ten changes, and nine of them came before a ballot. The tenth is the one worth sitting with: that candidate ran, lost, and changed party *afterwards*. Another left a party and rejoined it in time to file. Whatever those two decisions were about, they were not about conviction.

Six of the ten ended up registered with the same party — in a city where that party’s endorsement is the one worth having.

And yes — one of the residents who signed that letter changed their own party registration before running for office.

How we did this. Successive Los Angeles County voter files covering 2022 to 2026, matched on county voter identification number. Candidate lists come from the Burbank City Clerk and the school district. We report only that a change happened, never the day it was made — a registration record can be touched by a move or a name change as well as by a switch, and we will not treat a filing date as a confession. Forty candidates appear often enough to follow; two could not be traced and are excluded, and a change could fall between our records without our seeing it. The count is a floor, not a ceiling. Anyone entitled to the same files can check it.

We are not printing anybody’s name. We said that once already and we meant it. Every one of these people is entitled to register however they like, whenever they like, for whatever reason they like, and not one of them broke a rule. That is exactly the point. None of this is against the law. It is simply what the law permits, done quietly, by people who know precisely what a letter after a name is worth in this town.

And who signed the letter?

We looked them up as well. It seemed only fair, and it turned out to be the most interesting number on this page.

Party registration of the thirty signatories, against Burbank as a whole.

Registration	The signatories	Burbank overall
Democrat	34.5%	48.6%
Republican	34.5%	21.6%
No party preference	24.1%	23.1%
Everyone else	6.9%	6.7%

Read that again. Ten Democrats and ten Republicans put their names to that letter — exactly even — alongside nine more from no party or a smaller one. On this question Burbank does not divide along party lines at all. Democrats want the same thing Republicans want, in the same numbers, and they said so together, in public, over their own signatures.

Nonpartisan local elections are not a Republican position or a Democratic one. They are a Burbank position, and both sides already signed it.

That is the part worth holding onto, and it is why we are willing to say so plainly. We are not agreeing with this letter because it happens to suit us. We are agreeing with it because our neighbors across the aisle got there first, in equal number, and they were right.

And one last figure, offered without commentary. Five of those thirty signatories have themselves changed party registration since 2022 — 17.2 percent, against 13.3 percent for Burbank voters generally. One of them did it before running for office.

So we find ourselves in an unusual position. We agree with the letter. We agree with it completely. We would sign it tomorrow. Burbank's school board and city council races should turn on who has read the budget, who has sat through the meetings, and who is willing to ask an uncomfortable question about where the money went. They should not turn on registration.

But a principle only means something when it costs you something. It is easy to call for nonpartisan elections in a town where your own side's endorsement is the one worth having. The test of the principle is whether the same standard gets applied when the machinery is running in your favor — and whether it is applied to the people you like as readily as to the people you do not.

The letter asked voters to find out who is behind the endorsements and to ask whether they interviewed every candidate. That is excellent advice, and we repeat it. We would add one line to it:

Ask also whether anyone had to change who they are just to get on the ballot in the first place.

So here is the simple version. If these races really are nonpartisan — and they are, the Constitution says so — then stop telling people they have to switch.

Stop the quiet phone call that says someone would be a stronger candidate with a different letter after their name. Stop the back-channel arrangement made before the public meeting. Stop deciding among yourselves who is allowed to be viable, and then calling the result nonpartisan. Nobody needs to pass a law to fix this and nobody needs to sue anyone. The people making those calls could simply stop making them.

If it is truly nonpartisan, then stop telling candidates they have to switch.

But that is not how these elections work here, and everyone who has been near one knows it. Capable people are being told to switch. It is that simple, and the registration record shows what happens when they listen.

Burbank deserves elections decided on merit. So do the candidates — all of them, in every party, and the ones in no party at all.

Respectfully,

The Burbank Republican Party



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