

Dems take lead in voter registration

By **JAMES MCGINNIS**

Bucks County Courier Times

BENSALEM - One of the few GOP-controlled townships in Lower Bucks County, Bensalem has witnessed a surge in Democratic voter registrations since November, county records show.

There were 1,035 more registered Democrats than Republicans in town as of Friday, according to the county board of elections. Democrats haven't held such a lead since the 1970s.

Only two years ago, both parties were running neck and neck with registered voters. In 1995, the Republicans held the advantage, with 15,300 registered voters compared to 10,718 Democrats.

The current breakdown is 17,126 Democrats, 16,091 Republicans and 4,898 others listed as Independent or another affiliation.

Local Democrats cheered the new numbers, which they view as a call for change. Bensalem Republican Club Chairman Mike Brill said he doubted the change would have any impact on elections at the local level. Brill said he had yet to see the numbers from the Bucks County Board of Elections, and declined to comment further.

There were 575 new voter registrations since November. Of those, 295 were Democrats, 195 were Republican and 85 were other affiliations, according to the county.

Another 139 registered voters moved into town. Of those, 89 were Democrats, 28 Republicans and 22 other affiliations.

"Bensalem is going Democrat," said Harris Martin, a political activist who's been battling the local Republicans for nearly 10 years. Martin has spent hours analyzing local voter trends because, he said, "Democrats need to realize just how strong they really are."

"A lot of Democrats think the party simply can't win and, during the last election, many of them didn't come out," Martin added. "There's just such a misconception out there."

Democratic Party Chairman John Cordisco said the shift in voter registration was "significant for Bensalem but common across Bucks County."

"Countywide the Democrats are out-registering the Republicans almost two to one," Cordisco said. "This is partly driven by the frustration people feel with the Bush administration and the war [in Iraq] but also I think some credit must go to the efforts and organization of the local Democrats."

In the Bensalem Township government, Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo and four council members are Republicans. Bryan Allen is the only Democrat to get on the council in 10 years. Five Republicans and four Democrats sit on the school board.

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