

Mims' evolution: From Democrat to Republican via no political party

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Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims has come a long way politically since she was first elected as the county's top law enforcement official in 2006.

As in, all the way from Democrat to Republican, via no party preference.

It may have been forgotten, but Mims' party registration was a big issue during the 2006 race, even though the post is officially non-partisan.

There was the time Mims crashed a candidate forum ahead of the primary election that was sponsored by four local Republican organizations. She put out her campaign material at the event and started shaking hands, but when it came time for the actual forum with the other sheriff candidates, she was denied a spot.

After Mims won a spot in the runoff with California Highway Patrol Capt. Calvin Minor, then-Mayor Alan Autry caught flak for endorsing Mims over Minor, who was a Republican.

A year after the election, Mims changed her registration from Democrat to what was then known as Decline to State, and is now called No Party Preference. Then last December, she went from No Party Preference to Republican.

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Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims

Mims made both changes quietly. There was no fanfare. But there's no doubt the changes were made to send a message to the Democratic Party.

The first change, from Democrat to Decline to State, came over Second Amendment issues. Mims is a strong gun-rights supporter, and felt the Democratic Party was hostile toward legal gun owners.

Her eventual jump to the Republican Party was a culmination of law enforcement issues, she says, that were either supported by the state Democratic Party or pushed by Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat, and the Democratically controlled state Legislature.

Two Mims specifically mentioned were realignment, the 2011 law that shifts the incarceration and supervision of nonviolent, non sex-offending criminals from the state to counties, and Proposition 47, which was approved by voters last November and reclassified some property and drug crimes from felonies to misdemeanors.

"All the things detrimental to law enforcement driven by the Democratic Party," Mims says. "I just made a decision. I didn't want to be a part of that and registered Republican."

She knows the office is officially nonpartisan, "but my actions leave no doubt about where my beliefs are.

Mims' political evolution seemed complete last week when the Fresno County Republican Party officially recognized "her dedication to protecting and expanding the Second Amendment rights of Fresno County citizens" at its inaugural

“2nd Amendment BBQ & Gun Auction.”

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