

NEW YORK

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# Bloomberg quits Republicans

NEW YORK — Mayor Michael Bloomberg on Tuesday switched his party status from Republican to unaffiliated, a move certain to be seen as a prelude to an independent presidential bid in 2008.

The billionaire ex-CEO, a lifelong Democrat before he switched to the GOP for his first mayoral run, said the change in voter registration doesn't mean he is running for president.

"Although my plans for the future haven't changed, I believe this brings my affiliation into alignment with how I have led and will continue to lead our city," he said in a statement.

Bloomberg is estimated to be worth more than \$5 billion and

could underwrite a 2008 run, much as businessman Ross Perot did in 1992.



**Bloomberg**

Bloomberg spent more than \$155 million for his two mayoral campaigns.

During his 5½ years as mayor, Bloomberg often has been at odds

with his party and President Bush. He supports same-sex marriage, abortion rights, gun control and stem cell research, and he raised property taxes to help solve a fiscal crisis after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.