

Did Low Voter Turnout Cause Bongiovanni and Torgeson to Lose?

Following the 2026 Gilbert Town Council election, Chuck Bongiovanni suggested that low voter turnout contributed to his and Jim Torgeson's defeat. This analysis reviews the official 2022 and 2026 Maricopa County election results, including precinct-level voting and turnout data, to determine whether the available evidence supports that claim.

Conclusion: The available data do not support the claim that low voter turnout caused Bongiovanni and Torgeson to lose. Turnout declined substantially, but the evidence points more strongly to changes in voter preference. When 2026 results are modeled using 2022 turnout levels precinct by precinct, the same four candidates still win: Beth Goulden, Bill Spence, Joel Coen and Bus Obayomi.

Turnout Was Much Lower

	2022	2026	Change
Registered voters	162,279	170,275	+7,996
Voters casting ballots	58,240	45,409	-12,831
Turnout	35.89%	26.67%	-9.22 pts

Turnout was unquestionably lower. The question is whether the missing voters would have changed the winners.

Despite Lower Turnout, Spence and Obayomi Gained Thousands of Votes

Candidate	2022	2026	Change
Bus Obayomi	15,305	20,942	+5,637 (+36.8%)
Bill Spence	19,547	22,732	+3,185 (+16.3%)
Chuck Bongiovanni	21,530	18,979	-2,551 (-11.8%)
Jim Torgeson	22,052	18,321	-3,731 (-16.9%)
Bobbi Buchli	18,919	13,105	-5,814 (-30.7%)

There were 12,831 fewer voters in 2026, yet Spence gained 3,185 votes and Obayomi gained 5,637. Meanwhile, Bongiovanni lost 2,551 votes and Torgeson lost 3,731. That pattern is difficult to explain through turnout alone.

The Percentage of Voters Supporting Candidates Changed

Candidate	2022	2026	Change
Obayomi	26.3%	46.1%	+19.8 pts
Spence	33.6%	50.1%	+16.5 pts
Bongiovanni	37.0%	41.8%	+4.8 pts

Candidate	2022	2026	Change
Torgeson	37.9%	40.3%	+2.5 pts
Buchli	32.5%	28.9%	-3.6 pts

Bongiovanni and Torgeson actually increased their share of participating voters modestly, but Spence and Obayomi's support increased dramatically more. This is evidence of a changed competitive landscape, not simply fewer people voting.

Did Bongiovanni and Torgeson's Strongholds Stay Home?

We compared the 48 Gilbert precincts appearing in both the 2022 and 2026 council contests. If low turnout caused their defeat, precincts that strongly supported Bongiovanni and Torgeson in 2022 should have experienced disproportionately large turnout declines in 2026.

2022 Bongiovanni/Torgeson strength	Turnout decline
Strongest 25% of precincts	-9.5 pts
Upper-middle 25%	-9.4 pts
Lower-middle 25%	-9.1 pts
Weakest 25%	-8.6 pts

Pearson correlation: approximately +0.07

Spearman rank correlation: approximately +0.09

Both are extremely close to zero, indicating essentially no systematic relationship between Bongiovanni/Torgeson's 2022 precinct strength and the subsequent turnout decline.

Their Former Strongholds Also Changed

Gilbert precinct, 2022: Bongiovanni 512; Torgeson 469; Spence 394; Obayomi 304.

Gilbert precinct, 2026: Goulden 563; Obayomi 465; Spence 460; Coen 453; Bongiovanni 389; Torgeson 328; Buchli 235.

Highland, 2022: Bongiovanni 537; Torgeson 677.

Highland, 2026: Coen 456; Goulden 444; Spence 423; Torgeson 416; Bongiovanni 395; Obayomi 394; Buchli 274.

The candidate ordering changed inside historically strong incumbent precincts, indicating a change in voter preference that cannot be explained merely by fewer people voting.

What If 2026 Had 2022 Turnout?

Rank	Candidate	Projected votes
1	Goulden	31,503
2	Spence	29,156
3	Coen	28,677

Rank	Candidate	Projected votes
4	Obayomi	26,860
5	Bongiovanni	24,342
6	Torgeson	23,498
7	Buchli	16,807

Simply increasing the 2026 electorate to the size of the 2022 electorate while maintaining the 2026 voting pattern does not change a single position.

Restoring 2022 Turnout Precinct by Precinct

Rank	Candidate	Actual 2026	Projected
1	Beth Goulden	24,560	32,969
2	Bill Spence	22,732	30,516
3	Joel Coen	22,358	29,988
4	Bus Obayomi	20,942	28,168
5	Chuck Bongiovanni	18,979	25,487
6	Jim Torgeson	18,321	24,550
7	Bobbi Buchli	13,105	17,570

Bongiovanni: actual deficit to Obayomi = 1,963 votes; projected deficit = 2,681 votes.

Torgeson: actual deficit to Obayomi = 2,621 votes; projected deficit = 3,618 votes.

Rather than closing the gap, higher turnout increases their projected deficits under this model.

Conclusion

Low voter turnout did not demonstrably cause Chuck Bongiovanni and Jim Torgeson's defeat. Turnout affected the total number of votes cast, but the available evidence does not show that the missing voters were disproportionately Bongiovanni/Torgeson supporters or that restoring them would have changed the outcome. The 2022-to-2026 comparison instead shows a substantial shift in voter preference. Spence and Obayomi attracted thousands more votes despite a much smaller electorate, Goulden and Coen finished first and third, and several precincts that had previously been strong for Bongiovanni and Torgeson changed substantially. When 2022 turnout is restored precinct by precinct, Goulden, Spence, Coen and Obayomi still finish in the top four, while Bongiovanni and Torgeson remain fifth and sixth and their projected deficits grow.

Sources: Maricopa County Final Statement of Vote, 2022 Primary Election; Maricopa County Final Statement of Vote, 2026 Primary Election; Town of Gilbert certified election results.