

Holland solicited political opponent's St. Louis contributors

By Scott Williams
Of The Examiner

Before accusing political opponent Dick Baalmann of making himself "beholden" to campaign contributors in St. Louis, lieutenant governor hopeful Derek Holland attempted to tap those same resources for his own campaign.

After discovering last month that Baalmann was more than doubling him in fundraising, Holland used a Baalmann campaign disclosure to identify his opponent's supporters and to solicit contributions from them.

In a two-page letter dated June 30, Holland wrote Baalmann supporters: "I noticed that you have made a substantial contribution to Dick Baalmann's campaign for lieutenant governor."

The letter continued: "As you may have heard, my campaign is progressing well. My home base is intact, and the campaign is being waged in my opponents' backyards."

"I hope you will recognize my contribution to Missouri and to good government by making a donation to my campaign."

The letter apparently raised little money for Holland, who now accuses Baalmann of building his campaign almost entirely on the resources of wealthy supporters to whom he will be politically indebted if elected.

In an interview this week, Holland described Baalmann as "a St. Louis businessman with no political experience who will be beholden to the St. Louis business interests."

Holland, the Republican leader of the Missouri House, also identified Baalmann as his only serious opposition in the five-man race for the GOP nomination for lieutenant governor.

Holland's campaign director, Mary Potter, said Thursday that the solicitation letter was sent about a month ago to "quite a few" Baalmann supporters.

Potter said did not know of any contributions that had been generated, but she said the primary intent was not to raise funds but merely to acquaint Baalmann supporters with the Holland candidacy.

"Sure, they could have sent us money, and we would have loved it," she said. "But the gist was to make them aware that we have a candidate, too."

The unusual campaign tactic was not intended to hurt Baalmann, she added, although it might have had the effect of raising questions about his candidacy in the minds of some contributors.

She said one contributor replied in writing that he would have supported Holland's campaign instead, had he known that the three-term legislator from Lee's Summit was in the race with Baalmann.

Potter said the contributors were identified from a campaign financial statement filed June 18. That public disclosure showed Baalmann leading Holland in fundraising \$173,000 to \$58,000.