

McMaster accused of taking donations above the limit



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Lt. Gov.-elect Henry McMaster faces a public hearing in March related to his unsuccessful 2010 campaign for governor.

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COLUMBIA — Lt. Gov.-elect Henry McMaster, who touted his work on ethics reform during last year's race, has been accused of taking... in donations that exceed the legal limit when he ran unsuccessfully for governor in 2010.

Documents made public Tuesday show the state Ethics Commission voted last month to pursue allegations that McMaster took 51 over-the-limit contributions to help retire his campaign debt after he lost the primary. Donors can give statewide candidates a maximum of \$3,500 per election cycle. He's accused of accepting between \$250 and \$3,500 from 51 donors in excess of that.

McMaster did not take out a loan for his 2010 race. Rather, he continued to fundraise to pay the campaign's bills after losing the four-way primary that June, essentially paying vendors as he raised the money to do so. He collected a total of \$150,000 after the primary, paying off the campaign's final bills in May 2011.

The complaint, filed in April — two months before McMaster won the GOP primary for lieutenant governor — accuses the former two-term attorney general of creating a “phantom general election” in his campaign filings, as if he were competing in November 2010, to circumvent the law.