

Alton political consultant: Springfield ordeal 'worst escalation he has seen in 20 years'

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Alton political consultant and former Alton Mayor Brant Walker's chief of staff Dan Herkert had a front row seat for the ruckus created by Rep. Rodney Davis' campaign field manager Levi Lovell on Wednesday night in Springfield.

Herkert was attending the Betsy Dirksen Londigran campaign event and sitting in the front of JP Kelly's Bar, 300 E. Adams St. in Springfield when the Lovell altercation occurred. Springfield Police were called to the scene at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and charged the man. Lovell was arrested for allegedly harassing U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis' opponent Dirksen Londigran at the Springfield event.

An off-duty law enforcement officer helped the bar bouncer detain Lovell outside while Springfield Police was dispatched to JP Kelly's Bar.

The off-duty officer said this was a "weird deal" and he thought it must have been a staged event trying to incite violence. He said it is a shame to have seen politics go to this level. The law enforcement officer said an abundance of cell phones took video of the entire dispute Wednesday night.

Herkert said he witnessed a sea of cell phones out during the Springfield bar commotion.

"I didn't see how this started, but I could hear the ruckus sitting near the front window," Herkert said. "All of the sudden I saw a bouncer and employee of the establishment

ushering the guy to the door and it was obvious he was not right. He was screaming and yelling obscenities. We didn't know at the time he worked for Rodney Davis. The bouncer got him outside and he kept trying to get back in. The bouncer and another employee were wrestling him and pinned him to the ground until the police arrived. In all the years I have worked in politics that spans about 20 years, I have never seen anything that escalated to that point.”

Herkert said it is not acceptable how the tone in politics has become so fueled with anger and disparaging comments toward the other.

“I think the man went above and beyond by going into the candidate and her husband's face with his cell phone trying to incite something,” Herkert added. “Betsy's husband tried to walk away, but he kept pushing the video camera in his face.”

Herkert said he wishes people in politics, all the way to the president's office, would stop the incitement of anger into the political realm.

“I can remember when both sides could get together and have a drink at the end of the day, then go back at the heavy campaigning, but today there is so much fighting back and forth,” he said.

Herkert gave all the credit in the world to the Springfield Police for how they handled the event.



