

Democrats Back Move to Impeach

By David S. Broder
Washington Post Staff Writer

LOUISVILLE, Oct. 26—The Democratic National Committee, charging that "criminal behavior . . . has reached into the highest office of the land," called on Congress today to "take all necessary action, including impeachment . . . if warranted" against President Nixon.

A rephrased Watergate resolution also urged Congress to charter its own special prosecutor, even if Mr. Nixon names a new one of his own, in order to end "the crisis of confidence in our political institutions."

The action came at the end of a day that saw the opposition party leaders

muster a considerable show of unity as they disposed of half a dozen potentially troublesome internal issues.

With National Chairman Robert S. Strauss firmly in control, the committee rejected a liberal move to remove Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace's representative from the executive committee and then balked at conservative efforts to overturn a decision that would have virtually opened future party meetings to the public.

Strauss pulled one surprise by recommending former New York City Mayor Robert F. Wagner, a by-

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stander in recent party affairs, to a key post as chairman of the compliance committee that will enforce the delegate-selection guidelines for the 1976 convention.

Barbara Mikulski, the head of the commission that this weekend is to complete the drafting of those guidelines and a potential candidate for the compliance committee chairmanship, said she was "real pained and hurt" by Strauss' action.

Ms. Mikulski, a Baltimore city council member, indicated she may challenge Wagner, but most national committee members said they assumed that Wagner—who left city hall eight years ago and has played no part in the party's recent reform efforts—would win the compliance job with Strauss' backing. The choice will be made by members of the 17-man compliance committee, who have not yet been selected.

With most of the internal disputes compromised in advance, main interest cen-

tered on the impeachment resolution. The executive committee, which delayed action Thursday because of the Middle East situation, met for breakfast and came out with a statement calling this the worst crisis since the Civil War. It urged the House "to aggressively pursue a thorough investigation of all pending charges" against the President "and, if justified, to draft articles of impeachment."

The resolution was milder than one Strauss had been discussing, which would have called flatly for the impeachment of the President and his replacement by another Republican. But Arkansas Gov. Dale Bumpers said he was troubled by its language.

"I'm not sure the American people accept that the Democratic National Committee is above partisanship," Bumpers said. "We seem to be saying we believe in justice for everyone but the President. I want to afford him an opportunity to acquit himself."

That was sufficient to have the resolution withdrawn from the floor, and over the noon hour, a new draft was produced. It was not notably softer than the earlier one, but did make clear that the "improprieties, defalcations and unlawful and unconstitutional acts" it laid to the President were "charges" to be investigated, not crimes to be "aired."

The final version contained this sentence:

"The political process has been sullied and the high calling of public service has been subjected to cynical manipulation and criminal behavior which has reached into the highest office of the land, the Oval Office of the President."

The revised version was approved virtually without objection.

Neither resolution was as tough on Mr. Nixon as Strauss' speech, which charged that "never before has the President betrayed his oath of office in such a brazen manner." Strauss said Mr. Nixon "has acted in quasi-totalitarian indifference to rule by law . . . trampled on our constitutional separation of powers and betrayed his spoken and written word to the Senate and the people. . . ."

For a change, the Democrats expended all of their rhetorical fire on the opposition party President and treated each other with kindness. The tone was set early in the day, when a group of liberals and the members of the women's caucus put forward Patt Derian of Mississippi, a leader of the embattled national party loyalists in that state, to replace Wallace's representative, Mickey Griffin, on the executive committee.

Nancy Chandler of Maine argued that women deserved more than eight of the 25 executive committee seats, and former Rep. Alard K. Lowenstein of New York said Mrs. Derian's loyalty was more deserving of recognition than "a man who did not support Hubert Humphrey in 1968 or George McGovern in 1972."

But the possibility of a re-

buff to Wallace, who had written national committee members urging retention of Griffin, alarmed the conciliation-minded Democrats. Neil Staebler, the veteran liberal leader from Michigan, a state whose primary election Wallace carried in 1972, said Griffin had been helping him "try to put the party together" there and "I would not want to see us ignore the Wallace movement."

Even more dramatically, Earl Craig of Minnesota, representing the black caucus on the national committee, very reluctantly endorsed Griffin because "we feel the process we have been involved in is working and should continue."

The move to substitute Mrs. Derian for Griffin then was tabled by a lopsided voice vote.

Conservatives on the committee expressed some unhappiness with a resolution requiring that all future meetings of the party's commissions and committees be open to the public, unless two-thirds of the members voted, in open session, to close the doors.

Charles Ward of Arkansas tried to open the meetings only to members of the national committee—not the press and public—but withdrew his amendment after strong opposition was apparent.

Finance Chairman Joseph Cole said the national committee had spent \$85,000 more than it received in the first nine months of 1973 and faces a "very rough" financial picture for the balance of the year. His figures did not include proceeds of the Democratic telethon, which are being used to retire the 1968 campaign debt.

As expected, the national committee approved the call to the December, 1974, mid-term conference, where a new party charter will be discussed and policy resolutions debated, and it set up a procedure to receive the reform recommendations of the Mikulski commission, which meets in Washington Saturday and Sunday to wind up its report.