

O'Neill favors Jaworski for probe

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Watergate Prosecutor Leon Jaworski was urged Tuesday by House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill to take the job as chief investigator of the House's Korean influence-buying probe. Congressional sources said Jaworski may make his decision Wednesday.

O'Neill told reporters that he had personally urged an unnamed person "with a national reputation" to take the job. The sources said later that he was referring to Jaworski.

Jaworski, now in private law practice in Houston, Tex., was not reached for comment immediately.

O'Neill said five other persons also were contacted and "we'll get back to them" Wednesday.

Earlier Tuesday, House Republican leaders, rebuffed by President Carter in their demand for a special prosecutor to conduct the Korean investigation, said they will try to force a House vote on the matter.

At the same time, a group of junior Republicans called for creation of a new House panel to take over the investigation from Rep. John J. Flynt's Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. They suggested rehiring Philip A. Lacovara, the chief investigator who quit last Friday in a dispute with Flynt.

Flynt emerged from a meeting with Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill and other House leaders Tuesday and promised to give a written guarantee of "total independence" to whoever is chosen to replace Lacovara.

The "new counsel will have total independence for the remainder of this investigation," Flynt declared.

O'Neill said he wants to get the probe "back on track as quickly as possible."

O'Neill said he personally called one candidate "with a national reputation" to talk about taking the chief investigator's job. He added that five others also had been called, but refused to name them.

The speaker said earlier the prospects include eight or 10 persons who were involved in the Watergate investigation.

Lacovara was also an assistant prosecutor in the Watergate case.

"Whoever the new counsel is, he is going to have my backing to the fullest," O'Neill said.

The speaker said that taking the investigation away from Flynt's panel was one proposal being considered.

He said Monday that Flynt, a Georgia Democrat, had offered to turn the investigation over to some other committee, such as the new Select Committee on Ethics.

Carter told GOP leaders in a letter Monday that appointing a special prosecutor might impede the Justice Department's own investigation, which

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O'Neill

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he said was making "substantial progress." Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell said he expects prosecutions to result from the probe.

House Republican leader John Rhodes and Rep. John B. Anderson, the GOP conference chairman, said they and Rep. Bill Cohen, R-Maine, will try to force out of a committee and onto the House floor a bill to create the prosecutor.

Lacovara accused Flynt of holding meetings infrequently.