

Nixon Says He'll Seek Welfare Cut

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KEY BISCAVNE, March 30—President Nixon announced today that because the number of welfare recipients has declined he is asking Congress to cut nearly \$800 million in appropriations for welfare programs in the current fiscal year.

"This reduction in costs to the taxpayer can be made without in any way reducing welfare benefits to eligible recipients," he said in a statement.

Mr. Nixon said that Health, Education, and Welfare Secretary Caspar Weinberger reported to him "encouraging evidence that we are beginning to make some progress in solving the welfare mess."

At the end of December, there were 10.8 million welfare recipients under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, a reduction of 255,000 in a year, Mr. Nixon said.

"As Secretary Weinberger reported to me at last Thursday's Cabinet meeting, we are starting, at last, to turn back the ever-increasing welfare rolls which had become a tragic way of life for far too many Americans," Mr. Nixon said.

Weinberger reported Friday in California that the decline in AFDC, the largest of the welfare programs, was the first in 20 years and that it enabled 25 states to increase their payments to those families remaining on the rolls. The fiscal year that would be affected by Mr. Nixon's proposed \$800 million cut will end June 30.

It was unclear from which programs the \$800 million would be taken.

Mr. Nixon flew here Friday

with members of his family. He is expected to return to Washington Sunday or Monday.

The president spent most of the day at his residence here despite fair skies and warm weather. He worked for a time on a radio address on veterans' affairs which he is to deliver live at 1:07 p.m. Sunday, aides said.

Today he signed a bill to allow the Defense Department to pay funeral transportation and living expense benefits to families of men who died in North Vietnamese prison camps or while missing in action.

The legislation was rushed through Congress after it was disclosed eight days ago that the widow of a Navy captain who died in North Vietnam was refused help in traveling to his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery.

Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) introduced a bill in the Senate to permit payment of travel expenses of a family of any deceased prisoner of war or person missing in action in the Vietnam conflict.

The Senate passed the legislation without debate and without a dissenting vote, and three days later the House gave its approval and sent the measure to the White House.

In other action today, the President announced the appointment of Henry E. Catto Jr. to be chief of protocol. He will succeed Marion H. Smoak, who has resigned effective April 1.

Catto is a former ambassador to El Salvador and a former deputy U.S. representative to the Organization of American States. A son-in-law of Oveta Culp Hobby, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Eisenhower administration.