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Withdrawal of Olsen Distresses Newsmen

The State Department Correspondents Association yesterday expressed to Secretary of State William P. Rogers its "strong objection and deep distress" at the department's "failure to stand behind" the appointment of Arthur J. Olsen as its spokesman.

The Olsen appointment was withdrawn after objections from Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.). The correspondents' group told Rogers it felt "a dangerous precedent has been set whereby any member of Congress can exercise a personal veto over appointments which are not subject to Senate confirmation."

The resolution, passed unanimously at a meeting yesterday, strongly urged Rogers to "reconsider and stand by the original appointment." Copies were sent to Goldwater, Olsen and Robert J. McCloskey, Rogers' top press aide.

The newsmen expressed their "highest personal regard and trust" for Olsen and said they had looked forward to his appointment "on the basis of his integrity, intelligence, long professional experience and unquestioned veracity. These are the qualities we feel are

necessary in the demanding job of explaining accurately the department's policy and the reasons behind it."

The statement also said the rejection of Olsen "can politically compromise the vital position of the department spokesman who is not making policy but is entrusted with outlining it in the fullest terms possible."

Goldwater returned to Washington yesterday but an aide said he had no comment on the affair and that he would not release the text of the letter he had sent to Rogers. While the State Department said two such letters had been sent to the secretary, the aide said one of the two was sent to a lower ranking official. The aide also said the senator had not talked to President Nixon or to anyone in the White House about the case.