

Candidate's Accounts of Gift Differ

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Samuel E. Harris, an independent candidate for D.C. mayor, has told the staff of the Senate Watergate committee that he made a \$1,000 contribution to President Nixon's campaign at the urging of a White House aide who told him he was being considered for a federal government contract, according to a committee staff report.

Harris told the committee he never received the promised \$250,000 Department of Health, Education and Welfare contract for his management consulting firm, even though he later inquired about it, the report says.

When asked earlier this week about his contributions to the 1972 Nixon campaign, Harris contradicted the account as it was given to the staff of the Watergate committee. That account is contained in a report circulated to committee members and obtained by The Washington Post.

Harris could not be reached late yesterday to comment on the committee's account of his testimony.

In an interview Thursday, Harris said he told the committee that his contributions to the Nixon campaign were not tied to any specific contracts, but rather were made to protect the federal government contracts he had already received.

He also said that he was never specifically asked to contribute money to the campaign, but instead thought it would be the prudent thing to do. "I felt a contribution might prevent anyone from interfering with a contract I might already have," Harris said on Thursday. "I have a firm belief that black people have to learn to participate in the

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system according to the rules. If you are a business, you contribute to a guy who you think is going to win an election."

Harris contributed a total of \$2,000 to the Nixon campaign, according to campaign reports, and served as one of 25 black surrogates who campaigned for the President. In that capacity, he spoke in the President's behalf in Birmingham, Ala. Despite this activity, Harris said he did not vote in the election and up to May 7 — the date of the D.C. charter referendum—had not voted in 18 years. Harris is 39.

Harris is the president of Sam Harris Associates, Ltd., a Washington-based management consulting firm that he says does 95 per cent of his roughly \$500,000-a-year business with the federal government. He announced his candidacy last month at a District building press conference in which he acknowledged that he was a newcomer to the "political fray" but not to urban problems.

According to records on file with the General Accounting Office, Harris twice contributed \$1,000 to the President's campaign. His first contribution is dated May 30, 1972, and was received by the National Black Committee for the Re-Election of the President. His second contribution, made the day before the election, went to the Finance Committee to Re-Elect the President.

He made the second donation when, Harris said in the interview, he discovered "that the black-vote division was all together separate from the finance committee. One did not become a fully recognized contributor if he did not get on the white . . . list."



SAMUEL E. HARRIS
... Nixon surrogate

According to the staff report of the Watergate committee, Harris gave a different version when he was interviewed in March. It reads:

"Harris states that the day before the election he was called by Norris Sydnor, an assistant to Brown (Robert J. Brown, a special assistant to the President) at the White House, and told that his company was on an HEW list for a quarter million dollar HEW contract, a circumstance that surprised Harris since he had never submitted a proposal to HEW," the report says.

"Harris said Sydnor then asked for a \$1,000 contribution to the campaign, which Harris subsequently made after Sydnor observed that the HEW award would more than cover the amount of the contribution. Several months later, having heard nothing from HEW, Harris asked Sydnor about the contract, but did not receive a satisfactory response."

The report says that Sydnor denied having told Harris he was under consideration for a contract or soliciting him the day before the election for a contribution.

Sydnor could not be reached for comment yesterday.

As for his earlier contribution, Harris told the Watergate staff that "he was made to feel that his continued success in obtaining contracts would, in a significant degree, be dependent on his contributing to the President's re-election," according to the staff report.