

Congressional Report

Panels Move Toward Baring Contested Nixon Documents

Pool 9-11-75

Congress yesterday moved to force nearly complete public disclosure of 42 million White House documents former President Richard M. Nixon contends belong to him.

The action ultimately could make possible a radio broadcast of Nixon's White House tape recordings.

Panels in the House and Senate rejected as inadequate a set of proposed rules governing release of the documents and tapes. The rules were drafted by Administrator Arthur F. Sampson of the General Services Administration, who was appointed to his post by Nixon and who has resigned effective Oct. 15.

The Senate today is expected to take up a resolution approved unanimously by the Government Operations Committee, formally disapproving Sampson's proposed rules. Committee Chairman Abraham Ribicoff (D-Conn.) said he expected approval of the resolution.

Nixon has filed lawsuit in which he claims legal title over all his White House documents and asserts the absolute right to limit access to them.

The issue is expected to reach the Supreme Court, a process which could consume a year or more. Until then, the materials are likely to remain closed to public examination.

One of the rules Ribicoff objected to would have permitted the GSA administrator to deny public access to documents which "tend to embarrass, damage or harass living person" if those documents



ABRAHAM A. RIBICOFF

... expects approval

are not related to abuses of governmental powers.

Ribicoff said such a restriction was too broad, since much in Nixon's records could embarrass his former associates.

The Senate panel voted to instruct GSA to submit a new set of proposed rules by Oct. 10.

Sampson's craft would have prevented broadcast of the tapes by prohibiting researchers to re-record them. GSA said it wanted to prohibit their reproduction "to prevent unwarranted commercial exploitation."

But a House Administration subcommittee, in its own resolution disapproving the GSA plan, said:

"There is of course a risk that some people will reproduce the recordings and exploit them for commercial

purposes. That is the risk of a free society. Moreover, it is a risk the Founding Fathers accepted in adopting the free speech protections of the First Amendment. Any researcher can announce to the world the findings of his research."