

It's Definite

--Ford Will

Run in 1976

Washington

President Ford, getting a jump on other candidates for the job he has held three months, declared his firm intention yesterday to run in 1976 for a full four-year term in the White House.

Mr. Ford's decision to switch from a "probable" candidate to a "definite" candidate was disclosed through a spokesman almost casually at a routine White House news briefing.

A reporter who noted there was speculation that Mr. Ford was ready to declare his candidacy asked if the rumors were correct.

"Yes," replied press secretary Ron Nessen. "He intends to run in 1976."

The reason, Nessen said, is simple: "He enjoys being President."

Mr. Ford's formal announcement comes about two years before the election itself — and well ahead of the anticipated announcements by such Democratic contenders as Senator Henry Jackson of Washington and Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota.

Weeks ago, Senator Edward Kennedy (Dem-Mass.) announced he would not run.

After last week's Republican setbacks at the polls, there were some rumblings

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within the Republican party about the possibility that Mr. Ford might face a GOP challenge in 1976, perhaps from California Governor Ronald Reagan.

But Nessen and other White House officials refused to say if this was a factor in Mr. Ford's early declaration of his candidacy.

A spokesman for Reagan said he doesn't see anything new in Mr. Ford's announcement.

Clyde Walthall, Reagan's press secretary, said: "And the governor stands by his earlier statement that he hopes Ford will do so well that there will be no question what happens in 1976."

Before becoming vice president late last year Mr. Ford, who is 61, had promised his wife he would retire from public life. But he changed his mind after ascending to the nation's highest office on August 9 when President Nixon resigned.

Nessen said in response to questions that he assumed the President had consulted with Mrs. Ford before making his decision to seek a full term and that "she must have gone along with him."

Asked whether Mr. Ford also had consulted with Republican party leaders, Nessen said, "I don't know who he conferred with . . . if anybody."

Sources reported that Mr. Ford had told editors of U.S. News and World Report in an interview conducted last Monday for publication this weekend that he was ready to drop the "probably" from the description of his candidacy.

White House aides said the President had been ready to announce his decision personally at a news conference in Phoenix, Ariz., Thursday night.

But no one asked him about his campaign plans.

Associated Press