

President Declares He'll Run

Ford Pledges His Campaign Will Be Open

By Jules Witcover
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President Ford, emphasizing his incumbency by speaking from the Oval Office and with the excesses of Watergate clearly in mind, yesterday formally announced his candidacy for the 1976 Republican presidential nomination.

The President, elevated to the White House by the scandals that swept Vice President Agnew and President Nixon from office, pledged to run "an open and above-board campaign."

Mr. Ford said he wanted "every delegate and every vote I can get that can be won to my cause within the spirit and the letter of the law, and without compromising the principles for which I have stood all of my public life."

The President's announcement had been signaled as far back as last November, when White House press secretary Ron Nessen confirmed that Mr. Ford "intends to run in 1976."

In May, the President created a campaign planning committee headed by former White House aide Dean Burch, who on June 20 filed papers for "The President Ford Committee" with the Federal Election Commission.

A letter from Mr. Ford accompanied the filing, saying he authorized the group to raise and spend money "to further my nomination" for President.

The President's announcement yesterday covered his own candidacy only, and said nothing about a 1976 vice presidential candidacy for Vice President Rockefeller. Mr. Ford has said he sees no reason why Rockefeller should not be on his ticket again, but conservatives in the party are hoping to change his mind.

For a man who emphatically had told the congressional committee on his confirma-

tion as Vice President in 1973 that he had no intention of ever running for President, yesterday's formal announcement underscored the unexpected turns that American politics can take.

President Ford announced his candidacy at precisely the time a challenge within his Republican Party, long brewing, began to take shape.

See PRESIDENT, A6, Col. 2

PRESIDENT, From A1

Yesterday it was confirmed that a Ronald Reagan-for-President committee is being formed in Washington, with Reagan's knowledge if not his formal blessing.

The President, speaking before television cameras and a pool of reporters but not on live TV, renewed his inaugural pledge "to be President of all the people," representing the Republican Party while also trying to unite "the majority of Americans who acknowledge no absolute party loyalty."

As the candidate of a minority party, Mr. Ford of course must attract independent and Democratic votes to be elected.

The President also said he was "determined never to neglect my first duty as President," which he has found,

he said, to "require most of the stamina and concentration one human being can muster."

"But," he said, "it is also the duty of all Americans to participate fully in our free elective process, and I will do so enthusiastically."

"In all the 13 election campaigns I have undertaken, my basic conviction has been that the best politics is always to do the best job I can for all the people. I see no reason to change that successful philosophy. I expect to work hard, campaign forthrightly and do the very best I can for America in order to finish the job I have begun."

The President's brief statement was in itself a skeleton of the Ford campaign strategy:

- To maximize the psychological and real political ad-

vantages of an incumbent President.

- To emphasize that incumbency by being, above all, a working President, addressing the nation's problems in a non-partisan manner as much as possible.

- To campaign vigorously, in the knowledge that by virtue of the way he reached the White House he still has, to demonstrate popular support within his own party and the country. This will be the first national campaign for Mr. Ford, who ran successfully for Congress 13 times.

The kind of campaign outlined differs sharply from the one waged by Mr. Ford's predecessor, Richard M. Nixon, in 1972. The former President did little overt campaigning until the closing days of the fall campaign, then ran basically from the White House, and as President more than candidate.

Later, when the Watergate scandal burst upon him, Nixon said he had been so occupied with affairs of state, especially foreign policy, that he erred and turned over direction of his campaign to others who permitted excesses to occur. Mr. Ford indicated in his statement that he will attempt to function both as active policy maker in the White House and campaigner on the road.

Four key men in the President's campaign stood behind him in the Oval Office as he made his declaration of candidacy: Burch, who is to continue as head of a campaign advisory committee; former Secretary of the Army Howard H. (Bo) Callaway, who has succeeded Burch as campaign manager; former Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard, finance chairman, and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert C. Moot, announced yesterday as treasurer of the campaign.

Callaway started working Monday from the Ford committee's small temporary suite of offices in the Ring Building, 1200 18th Street NW, with only two other salaried employees and some volunteers.

With competition for the Republican nomination already forming on the party's right wing, Mr. Ford is expected to be obliged to test his strength in key presidential primaries.

Republican Gov. Meldrim Thomson of New Hampshire has already said he will oppose Mr. Ford in that state, but Thomson is friendly with Reagan and would be expected to step aside if Reagan opposed the President there.

* SEE LETTER TO EDITOR, NYT 9 JUL 75