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Adv 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, April 26

O'Brien-Kennedy 220

NEW YORK AP - Democratic National Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien said Sunday Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts must be rated among the party's potential presidential contenders in 1972, despite his own disclaimer of candidacy.

"... When I look at the leaders of the Democratic Party across this country and in the Congress, I must obviously include the majority whip of the U.S. Senate on that list," O'Brien said.

O'Brien gave his views on the Metromedia Radio News program "Profile."

O'Brien would not discuss the political impact of the July 18, 1969 automobile accident which killed Miss Mary Jo Kopechne, a passenger in Kennedy's automobile.

Kennedy pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of the accident, which he did not report for some nine hours. He received a two month suspended jail sentence, and was placed on probation for a year.

On July 20, Kennedy announced he had decided to remain in the Senate and would seek re-election in 1970. He said if elected, he would serve a full six-year term, thus ruling out a 1972 presidential bid.

While O'Brien said he does not quarrel with Kennedy's announced position, he said the Massachusetts senator belongs on any list of prospective White House challengers.

"He has proven himself outstanding in his role in the Senate and I can't believe that he will not continue to be looked to for leadership by many Democrats across the country," O'Brien said.

O'Brien said Sen. Edmund S. Muskie of Maine and former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey are among others on the list of likely contenders.

"But let me hasten to add, there are many others, there are many young Democrats in the Congress and in the country, and I will predict in some of the statehouses... and it's very very difficult to predict who may emerge in this regard..."

"I've named some obvious names that would certainly be under serious consideration in 1972, in my judgment, but I want to underscore that also in my judgment other names will come forward for consideration, because that's the process," O'Brien said.

End adv 1 p.m. EST Sunday, April 26, sent April 25.

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