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ITT Suit By Nader Dismissed

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The merger of International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. with the Hartford Fire Insurance Co. has withstood a court challenge by Ralph Nader and three others.

Nader's suit, dismissed yesterday, was the last pending court challenge to the merger, the largest in U.S. corporate history. Nader, however, has indicated he may appeal the decision.

The Securities and Exchange Commission is investigating heavy stock transactions just before the merger was approved May 23, 1970.

Columnist Jack Anderson charged recently that the U.S. Justice Department agreed to an out-of-court settlement with ITT after the conglomerate pledged \$400,000 toward next August's Republican National

Convention. That settlement said ITT could keep Hartford Fire if it divested itself of certain other holdings.

The Nader suit was not related to that, but rather to the merger's approval by former Connecticut Insurance Commissioner William R. Cotter, now a U.S. representative.

Under state law, the insurance commissioner is given wide powers to approve the takeover of Connecticut-based insurance companies by out-of-state non-insurance corporations. The statute also allows appeal to the state's Superior Court by anyone who feels aggrieved or injured by a commissioner's ruling.

In his ruling against Nader and three other plaintiffs, Superior Court Judge Walter J. Sidor said they did not prove aggrievement and, therefore, did not have standing in the court. Nader's attorney in the case, Dwight Schweitzer of Hartford, called the ruling a technicality, not related to

the merits of the case.

Nader said the ruling "quite likely" would be appealed.

Nader called the decision a "leap backward" in the law of standing, in which consumer advocates can use the courts to file suit.

"What the court is saying is if you don't have a sizable monetary stake, then the doors of the courts are closed to you," Nader said.

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