

Nixon Setback Over

By Peter Lisagor

WASHINGTON — (CDN) —President Nixon suffered a significant reversal in his massive attempt to shake Democratic control of the newly-elected 92nd Congress.

His only comfort appears to have been a slight conservative tilt in the Senate, which he desperately sought and which might ease the strains of a divided government for two more years.

However, neither he nor Vice President Agnew could feel greatly rewarded for their bitterly intensive labors in behalf of individual candidates, particularly in the South and West.

The Democrats were cheered by the inroads they made in a dozen gubernatorial races, including Pennsylvania and Ohio, which enliven their prospects for 1972.

Both the major parties seemed to have won a little and lost a little as the voters split down the middle on the two most emphasized issues of the campaign: law-and-order and the economy.

Adlai Stevenson III, a prime GOP target on the law-

and-order issue, won a smashing victory over Sen. Ralph Smith in Illinois, catapulting himself into prominence as a possible Democratic vice-presidential possibility in 1972.

Rep. John Tunney duplicated Stevenson's triumph in California, despite Republican incumbent George Murphy's attempt to capitalize on disorderly demonstrations against the President at San Jose in the last days of the campaign.

On the other hand, one of the genuine surprises was the defeat in Maryland of Democratic Sen. Joseph Tydings, attributed in part to his strong support of gun control legislation, which provoked the aggressive opposition of the powerful National Rifle Association.

In two Southern states which they campaigned strenuously, the President and Agnew were rebuffed. The Democrats swept Florida's Senate and governor races, and in Texas Democratic Lloyd Bentsen beat a prospective GOP star, George Bush for the Senate. Both winners, however, are conservative.

The ideological shift to the right was furthered in New

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York, where Conservative Party candidate James Buckley, an avowed Republican, won as the result of a split in the state's traditional liberal vote between GOP incumbent Charles Goodell and Democratic rival Richard Ottinger.

In Tennessee, conservative Republican William Brock brought down the veteran Democrat, Albert Gore, a man marked at the outset as the White House's chief senatorial target.

The Maryland victor, Rep. Glenn Beall, is a down-the-line Nixon supporter. And Robert Taft Jr., who won in Ohio, stands to the right of the retiring Democrat, Stephen Young.

When the campaign began, the White House reckoned that with a vigorous effort, keyed on the theme of crime, campus unrest, and street disorders, the GOP might win control of the Senate with a turnover of seven seats.

Agnew started early and conducted a tireless, bare-knuckled swing around the nation in the drive to unseat Democrats.

But by the time the President joined in, GOP expectations were scaled down. The hope then was to minimize Republican losses in the House, and to pick up a crucial few seats in the Senate.

As game plans go, it worked after a fashion. But the character of the GOP campaign, its caustic rhetoric and the stratagem to associate Democrats with disorders and violence, may have strewn the path of the President and Agnew with enough vindictiveness to create continuing trouble in the stalemate between Congress and the White House.

From the election results, no single issue was clearly pervasive. The law-and-order and economic issue seem to have resulted in a stand-off nationwide.

Local, not national concerns affected most races.

In a narrow sense, the administration achieved a success in defeating Gore and Goodell for the Senate.

But, to the extent that Nixon put his personal prestige on the line in some 23 states, he got a poor return. And only time will determine how much it may have cost him.