

# PRESIDENT SHUNS 1972 BALLOT ROLE

Taft to Be Ohio Stand-in—  
A Similar New Hampshire  
Move by Cotton Hinted

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COLUMBUS, Ohio, May 27—

The White House has apparently decided to use stand-in candidates for President Nixon, rather than to put his name on the ballot, in most of next year's primary races against Administration opponents.

The first to be identified was Senator Robert Taft Jr. of Ohio, who announced at a news conference today that he would be the state's favorite-son candidate, "standing in for the renomination of President Nixon," in an effort to unite the feuding and leaderless factions of Ohio Republicanism.

Sources here and in Washington said that Mr. Taft, who is 54 years old, had conferred before making his statement with Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who is expected to manage Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign. Mr. Taft also talked with Donald Rumsfeld, counselor to the President.

One reason for using stand-ins, the sources said, is to keep the President "above combat," seemingly preoccupied not with politics but with affairs of state as much as possible.

"Forces from outside Ohio are plotting to embarrass the President," Mr. Taft said, adding: "President Nixon should not be burdened with such a fight as he is preoccupied with winding down the war and building up the United States economy."

Another reason for stand-ins is a desire to avoid seeming to take the challenger—probably Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr. of California—too seriously. Also, if Mr. Nixon were an official candidate during the primary season, television appearances could be interpreted

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## President to Shun Role on Ballot in 1972

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as political appeals, which might make it possible for Mr. McCloskey to get free air time.

There is ample precedent for stand-ins. Former Gov. Matthew E. Welsh of Indiana stood in for President Johnson there in 1964, and former Gov. John W. King of New Hampshire stood in for Mr. Johnson there in 1968.

However, as one of Mr. Nixon's political advisers argued several weeks ago, stand-ins have often failed, partly because local issues tend to get drawn into the campaigns.

In the end, Mr. Nixon's name may be on the ballot in some states regardless of his wishes. If there is a Republican contest in Oregon, for example, the law requires the Secretary of State to list everyone generally considered to be a candidate, and no person so listed is permitted to withdraw.

### Nixon Critics Scored

Mr. Taft said that critics such as Mr. McCloskey and former Senator Charles E. Goodell of New York "are serving neither their country nor their party." They could not defeat Mr. Nixon in Ohio, he said, but could cause "real embarrassment."

The Ohio primary involves only the selection of delegates, not a Presidential preference poll. Mr. Taft said that he would step aside if Mr. Nixon decided later to go on the ballot. But the Senator indicated that he thought this was unlikely.

Mr. McCloskey said in a statement that Mr. Taft was "trying to protect President Nixon from a test of his Vietnam policy by the voters of Ohio." Mr. Goodell said Mr. Taft's statement was a sign that the White House was worrying about Republican insurgents.

Although he hedged in response to questions on the subject, Mr. Taft's early announcement also represented an attempt to move into a dominant position in the state party and to close the wounds left by



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Senator Robert Taft Jr. telling of his plans at conference in Columbus.

his primary fight last spring against former Gov. James A. Rhodes.

Both Mr. Taft and Senator William B. Saxbe, also a Republican, have told the Administration recently that party disharmony here could cost Mr. Nixon the state.

The Senators stopped short of an attempt to purge John S. Andrews, the state chairman, who is an ally of Mr. Rhodes. Conceding that he and Mr. Andrews had had "differ-

ences from time to time," Mr. Taft said that now was "no time to split the party again."

### Chairman Skips Support

Several hours after Mr. Taft spoke, Mr. Andrews issued a statement notable for its omission of any endorsement of the Senator's plan. Any favorite son candidate "must be acceptable to the President," he noted dryly, adding that he would "remain in contact with national committee leaders relative to the President's wishes."

John W. Bricker, the former Governor and Senator, said of the Taft move, "It will be all right as long as he doesn't try to dump Andrews or something."

Democratic officials greeted Mr. Taft's announcement with allegations that he "plans to raid the party treasury" to pay off campaign debts exceeding \$300,000. Mr. Taft said that such allegations were "completely unfounded."

Mr. Taft, a freshman, is a grandson of a President and a son of a former Senator known as "Mr. Republican." His name would be a prime asset in the campaign leading to the May 2 primary, but he is not a colorful candidate.

He said that he did not aspire to the Vice-Presidency, which some observers have been as his goal, but he refused to say he would reject the position if Mr. Nixon offered it.