

Muskie and Brooke Hit Rehnquist

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) said today Supreme Court nominee William H. Rehnquist "exalts the powers of government over the rights and liberties of the individual" and he will vote against his confirmation.

Republican Sen. Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts also announced last night that he would vote against Rehnquist.

Both Muskie and Brooke, in challenging Rehnquist's civil rights record, emphasized that in a 1967 letter he wrote "we are no more dedicated to an integrated society than we are to a segregated society."

"That is a stunning and categorical rejection of the whole thrust of the civil rights movement," Muskie said. And Brooke said he found it difficult to accept such a statement "as befitting a man to sit on the Supreme Court."

Muskie said that Rehnquist, a top aide to Attorney General John N. Mitchell, "is not a judicial conservative at all in the time-honored meaning of the term."

Rather, he said, Rehnquist's views are "those of a statist and authoritarian," of a man "who would reshape the American Constitutional system in the name of government efficiency despite the cost in personal freedom to his fellow citizens."

Muskie, an undeclared contender for the Democratic presidential nomination, also said that Rehnquist has "failed to demonstrate a commitment to fundamental principles of equal protection."