

Godwin's Race Hits Setback

Ex-Delegate Eyes GOP Bid For Governor

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By Helen Dewar

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Former Virginia Democratic Gov. Mills E. Godwin, a five-time opponent for the Republican gubernatorial has drawn his first prospect nomination.

Former State Del. Don E. Earman (R-Harrisonburg) said Sunday he will oppose Godwin unless Godwin joins the GOP, embraces its principles and pledges to support its nominees before the party's nominating convention in June.

All Godwin has said thus far is that he will accept the Republican nomination and "run as a Republican" if the party nominates him.

Godwin said Saturday he may reassess his plans to run as a Republican if the political fallout from the Watergate bugging scandal intensifies and if "it appears to be having a strongly adverse effect on the Virginia political situation."

But, in answer to questions at a Hampton meeting, Godwin said, as he has before, that he doesn't expect that this will happen.

State Republica Chairman Richard D. Obenshain also said he does not expect Godwin to back away from the party, saying he believes Godwin's statement was "just an expression of his deep concern" about the affair.

Republican leaders said it was too early to assess the strength of Earman's candidacy, but some suggested he might pick up considerable support from western Virginia "mountain-valley" Republicans who are unhappy with Godwin and his refusal to embrace the party before his nomination.

Earman, a 39-year-old attorney who served in the General Assembly from 1966 to 1972, said he expects to have the support of "a number of" state legislators and "more than one congressman," but declined to name them at this point.

"I kept calling people and urging them to run and they kept saying, 'Why don't you run?' . . . so I am running," said Earman. "There is not a Republican candidate in the field, and we're going to have one . . . as of this time, I intend to be that candidate."

Meanwhile, the Virginia Democratic Party steering committee decided Sunday to convene the party's central committee June 10—the day after

See VIRGINIA, C2, Col. 5

VIRGINIA, From C1

the Republican convention—to decide whether to endorse Lt. Gov. Henry E. Howell for governor.

There is no Democratic gubernatorial candidate for the first time since Reconstruction.

Strong sentiment for a Howell endorsement was reportedly expressed at the steering committee meeting, but party moderates are expected to fight vigorously against an endorsement at the central committee meeting.

Howell, who was campaigning in Charlottesville yesterday, came to the aid of 15 motorists who were given citations when they arrived at the Division of Motor Vehicles to buy new license plates, according to the Associated Press.

They were stopped by a DMV inspector, Terry Guioll, and charged with driving with expired plates. Sunday was the deadline for getting new plates.

One of the 15, Allan Williamson, a University of Virginia professor, said the action was a "set-up trap."

Howell called the DMV office in Richmond and an official there said the division would "do what it can to contact the 15 drivers and have their cases nolle prossed" (dropped).

In another political development, Democratic Attorney General Andrew P. Miller has run into opposition from top leaders of the Virginia AFL-CIO for saying last week he would not support Howell even if Howell won the Democratic endorsement.

Miller had been endorsed by

the AFL-CIO in 1969 and was expected to be endorsed by it again this year.

But labor sources indicated that the 70,000-member labor association might endorse a Republican if the GOP nominates a moderate. The AFL-CIO has already endorsed Howell.

Miller's statement also drew criticism from State Sen. L. Douglas Wilder (D-Richmond),

the only black senator, who accused Miller of trying to "be all things to all people" and said it could have "serious effects as to his election."

As yet, the Republicans have no announced candidates for attorney general, although several state legislators, including a couple of former Democrats, have been mentioned as possibilities.