

Congress Will Test Voter Sentiment

By Carroll Kilpatrick
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President Nixon is fully aware that the next five or six weeks may be crucial in determining whether he will be able to serve out his term or be forced out of office, and he is planning his strategy accordingly.

When Congress goes home for its Christmas vacation, every member will be testing sentiment to find out whether the voters want the President to resign, be impeached or stay in office.

White House officials who have discussed the matter with the President say he recognizes that the Republican districts, not the Democratic ones, could decide the issue and that it will be Republican senators and representatives who will hold the decisive votes.

Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania said yesterday that "every member of Congress is a walking Gallup Poll, and he is a better one because he has more at stake."

Reports by the Gallup and Harris polling organizations published today show that Mr. Nixon has made some headway in the last month, increasing his approval rating from 32 to 37 per cent in the Harris report and from 27 to 31 per cent in the Gallup report.

For months, Democratic and Republican leaders on Capitol Hill have said that Congress will vote the way the people wish on the impeachment issue and that members of Congress have been waiting for opinion to develop.

"The momentum for resignation or impeachment will come from the people," Republican National Chairman George Bush said last week, adding that he did

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not believe there was any such momentum yet.

Although Mr. Nixon is more popular in the South than in other regions, even there he has problems. Several Southern Republican leaders at a meeting in Atlanta over the weekend expressed public support for the President but said privately they do not necessarily look forward to campaigning beside him next fall.

"He would do well in Mississippi and in some rural areas, but even in the South he will have to be used sparingly," a GOP state chairman said.

One indication of Northern Republican thinking came this week from Rep. Glenn R. Davis of Wisconsin, a friend of the President since they served to-

gether in the House a quarter of a century ago.

"Every day, I get to feeling more and more that Nixon will have to get out," Davis said in an interview with the Milwaukee Sentinel Monday, an interview obviously designed for home consumption.

Davis is one of the members of Congress who goes home almost every weekend and thinks that he does not

need the Christmas recess to determine sentiment in his district.

He indicated that one effort the White House made to shore up the President's position has hurt rather than helped. Last weekend's disclosures about the President's personal finances, intended to allay rumors of scandal, nevertheless have raised new questions in the minds of many people.

Referring to the fact that Mr. Nixon has paid no state income taxes, Davis said: "There isn't a congressman from Wisconsin or any other state who could stay in office if he tried that."

Even though the President scheduled meetings last month with every member of Congress and has met with other congressional groups since then, still is little rapport between Congress and the White House, as Davis indicated when he complained in the interview about the imminent departure of White House counselors Melvin R. Laird and Bryce Harlow.

"When they leave, I don't know who we will be able to talk to over there," Davis said.

As Republican campaign leaders said after a meeting with the President Tuesday, support for the President is stronger in some parts of the country than others. Rep. Robert H. Michel (Ill.), chairman of the House Republican campaign commit-

tee, said he would be happy to have the President campaign in his district next year.

"I think there would be no question that in the Midwest and Southern areas of the country, this would be pretty true," Michel said. "Maybe there might be other views with respect to other sections of the country."

George Bush emphasized the importance of the competency issue at the Republican meeting last weekend in Atlanta.