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## Democrats Asking \$1.25-Million To Settle Suits Over Watergate

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By ANTHONY RIPLEY, JAN 31 1974

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 — Six suits have been filed by Robert S. Strauss, chairman of both sides, with alleged damages totaling more than \$13-million. None has gone to trial. The Democratic National Committee, said today that the party was willing to settle the damage suits with the Republicans over the Watergate break-in for \$1.25-million but not for the \$600,000 that has been offered in the last few weeks. A series of joint pre-trial depositions has been taken.

Last April the Committee for the Re-Election of the President pushed to settle both the Democratic suits and one brought by Common Cause. The effort failed. At the time, John N. Mitchell, former Attorney General and former chairman of the re-election committee, offered to settle the Democratic party suits for \$525,000.

Mr. Oliver has been particularly critical of Mr. Strauss's meeting with Mr. Mitchell, who he said was neither a Republican party official nor a lawyer for the committee at the time. He called the meeting "very suspicious, if not unethical."

The Democratic party spokesman said Mr. Strauss left this afternoon for Pittsburgh and was not available for comment.

In the past he has defended his actions saying they were taken only with the approval of major party figures and officials.

Common Cause later won its suit, which was brought to compel the re-election committee to reveal all of its campaign contributions and expenses.

A spokesman for the committee said that Mr. Strauss had rejected the latest Republican offer but would consider \$1.25-million as a reasonable settlement for the suit brought in the party's name and that of the party's former chairman, Lawrence F. O'Brien.

But a separate suit has been filed by R. Spencer Oliver, former executive director of the Association of State Chairmen, and by the association because it was Mr. Oliver's telephone that was discovered tapped after the burglary at party headquarters in the Watergate Office Building on June 17, 1972.

"There is obvious animosity, enmity, between Strauss and me," Mr. Oliver said today. "I don't really want to be in a settlement with Strauss, but if the Republicans insist and the state chairman and Strauss work out an agreement, I won't stand in their way."