NyTimes Loss of Ford Seat Shakes G.O.P.; Democrats Predict Sweep in Fall

By MARJORIE HUNTER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19—The publicans were clearly joited at Democrat yesterday left Re-can seat. publicans badly shaken today, For the first time, some of while Democrats jubilantly predicted landslide victories this conceded that Watergate might

Mr. Ford said he was just a this year's elections. little bit "frightened" by the election outcome in Michigan's leaders had been discounting Fifth District. George Bush, the suggestions that the Water Republican National chairman, gate scandals mights rub off said he was "concerned." on their party's Congressional William McLaughlin, the Republican State Chairman and Laughlin and Laughlin, the Republican State Chairman and Laughlin an

In the election, Richard F. VanderVeen, the Democrat, defeated Robert VanderDaan, the Republican candidate, by 53,-008 votes to 46,159.

Rank - and - file House Re-

loss of Vice President Ford's the loss of what they had former Congressional seat to a thought was a "safe" Republi-

indeed be a major factor in

on their party's Congressional

Just two weeks ago, John P. publican State Chairman in Murtha, a Democrat, won a still-disputed victory Harry M. Fox, a Republican, for a vacant House seat in

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Western Pennsylvania. But the margin was so narrow-about 200 votes - that it represented no clear-cut indication of voter sentiment.

Furthermore, Mr. Murtha had largely ignored the Watergate issue in that campaign, con-centrating instead on economic

Delaying his departure for more than an hour, the Vice President conferred by telephone with officials in both Washington and Michigan before moving into the dimly litted by the property of the plane part of the property of the property of the plane part of the property of the plane part of the plan cabin of the plane—part of the White House fleet—to talk to

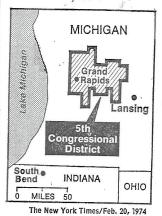
"Well, it's a beating," he said dejectedly. "I'm very upset."

Earlier in the day, at a news

Earlier in the day, at a news conference in Chattanooga, Mr. Ford had predicted victory for the Republican nomiiee, Robert VanderLaan, against Richard F. VanderVeen, the Democrat.

It had been a safe Republican seat since 1910, and Mr. Ford has usually won 60 per cent or more of the votes in elections to that seat during the last 25 years.

While saying last night that Watergate had an impact on the election, Mr. Ford made no direct mention of the Watergate scandals in a more formal statement today. He attributed the Democratic wictory to "the



out at the polls and "skepticism prevalent about politics today."

Mr. Bush, the Republican National Chairman, also expressed some concern today that Watergate might have had an impact on the eliection.

Asked if he was still confident that Watergate is irrelevant to the elections, Mr. Bush replied: "Less than I was yesterday. I have to say when this man [the Democrats] injected Watergate and made the

But as returns from the Michigan race began coming in last night, Vice President Ford conceded that, "to some extent, it [Watergate] had an impact."

The Vice President had just addressed a gathering of engineers in Chattanooga, when news of the election outcome reached him.

Safe G.O.P. Seat

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The New York Times/Feb. 20, 1974

The New Yor