

# Watergate Issue in Calif. Race

By William Endicott  
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VENTURA, Calif.—Some Democrats in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties are beginning to worry privately that their efforts to exploit Watergate as the major issue in Tuesday's special congressional election here may backfire.

The feeling is that if after such a campaign the favorite and the lone Republican candidate, State Sen. Robert J. Lagomarsino, pulls enough votes to win without a runoff, the victory will be widely interpreted as a vote of confidence for President Nixon.

That is the last thing the Democrats want.

Ghita Ginberg, who heads the Santa Barbara County Democratic Central Committee, admitted to mixed feelings about the campaign emphasis on Watergate because "people are overwhelmed by so many other problems."

But she said Watergate is "all-pervasive" and the recent election in Michigan "was such a good sign."

In that election, a Democrat who called his campaign a referendum on the Nixon administration, won a congressional seat that had been held 25 years by Vice President Gerald R. Ford.

The election here Tuesday is to fill the vacant 13th district seat of the late Charles M. Teague and, with an election the same day in Ohio's 1st District, generally is viewed as a test of whether sentiment against the President will adversely affect Republicans in this year's regular congressional races.

Nearly all the seven Democratic candidates in the race are hitting hard at the idea that to vote for Lagomarsino would be to send a vote for Mr. Nixon to an impeachment Congress.

By all conventional standards, however, Lagomarsino should win easily.

Although Democrats hold a slight edge in voter registration in the district, 110,099 to 102,628, Teague, a Republican, was the congressman for 19 years before he died Jan. 1, midway in his 10th term.

Lagomarsino, closely identified with Teague, also is a proven vote-getter in the area. Running in a district nearly paralleling the congressional district lines, he has won election to the state senate four times in the last 12 years.

In 1970, he defeated a

Democratic challenger by more than 2 to 1.

In addition to the GOP loss in Michigan, a Democrat earlier won a special congressional race in Pennsylvania for a seat Republicans had held 24 years, and even Lagomarsino conceded in an interview that this is not a "conventional year."

When he is confronted with Watergate, he said he tells voters, "Hell, that's not an issue here. I wasn't part of that."

He said he is not downgrading Watergate as an issue, because it is, but most people are more interested in inflation, the energy crisis, unemployment."

Initial campaign-financing reports show Lagomarsino and Ojai Mayor James Loebli, usually conceded to be the Democrats' front-runner, to be the biggest campaign spenders.

Both Democrats and Republicans are mounting massive telephone drives in the last days of the campaign in an effort to get out the voters in their respective parties and solicit support from independents.

U.S. Sen. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) appeared at a \$10 a ticket cocktail party Friday night in Oxnard to raise money for the Democrats' telephone drive.

State Comptroller Houston I. Flournoy, a GOP gubernatorial candidate, called last week for extraordinary Republican volunteer efforts for Lagomarsino to reverse the national trend of "gloomy news" for the party.

Nevertheless, the predictions still are for a light turnout, even though nine cities in the district have municipal elections coinciding with the Congressional vote.

What appears to be general voter apathy is compounded by the gasoline shortage.

"People," said an elections officer in Ventura County, "just might not want to drive to the polls."

Some Republicans fear the gasoline crunch may hurt their candidate.

The speculation is that drivers in long gasoline lines might be looking for somebody to blame, and an incumbent officeholder, as is Lagomarsino, might be the handiest and most immediately accessible target.

Democrats are hopeful that with seven candidates in the field they can spread out the vote sufficiently to force Lagomarsino into an April 2 runoff with the top Democratic vote-getter.

To win Tuesday, a candidate will need a simple majority of the total votes cast.

Whoever wins the special election will have to run again in the regular June primary and November general elections for a full two-year term in a newly reapportioned district with boundaries substantially different from the present 13th.

## Cincinnati Election

### To Test GOP Strength

In perhaps a more clear-cut test of Republican survivability in the wake of

Watergate, former Republican city councilman Willis D. (Bill) Gradison Jr. of Cincinnati seeks today to fill a vacant House seat in Ohio's First Congressional District. His Democratic opponent is Thomas A. Lukens.

The district is traditionally a Republican stronghold, having gone to GOP candidates with only three exceptions in every congressional election for the last 62 years. But earlier Republican setbacks in old GOP districts in Johnstown, Pa., and Grand Rapids, Mich., have Gradison running scared.

## Prince Charles To Visit Calif.

SAN DIEGO, Mar. 4 (AP)—The visit of Prince Charles next week is stirring expressions of good will and warmth — especially warmth.

The future king of England, now a 25-year-old Navy lieutenant, is communications officer on the frigate Jupiter, on a training cruise in the Pacific. Charles and his crewmates arrive March 14 for a seven-day visit to San Diego.

Among offers of gifts to Prince Charles, at least two have been reported respectfully declined: a swank hotel penthouse costing \$500 per night but free to Charles, and a set of "Stars and Stripes" underwear, knitted for the royal visitor by a San Diego woman.