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Senator Gurney Indicted in Florida

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Tallahassee, Fla.

Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep-Fla.), a member of the Senate Watergate committee, has been indicted by a county grand jury here on charges of violating Florida election laws, his office announced yesterday.

Gurney immediately declared his innocence, and called the indictment a "political Pearl Harbor attack" by Democrats seeking his Senate seat.

John Gardner, Gurney's Washington press aide, said Gurney had been indicted on a law against accepting campaign funds without designating a campaign trea-

surer or setting up a campaign bank account.

Gurney's office said the indictment involved only one count and was for a misdemeanor that carries a maximum penalty of a \$1000 fine and one year in jail.

The grand jury had been told by Circuit Judge John Rudd that it could indict a federal official for a violation of that state law.

The grand jury began its investigation of Gurney at the urging of Marshall Harris, a Democratic state legislator from Miami.

"This is an unfortunate result of a vicious and unwarranted attack," Gurney said

in a statement. "I am confident that the process of justice and courts will operate swiftly to vindicate me of this unlawful charge and any wrongdoing. I am absolutely innocent."

Gurney, 60, has announced he will seek re-election this year. He was first elected to the Senate in 1968 after three terms in the U.S. House.

The grand jury's probe of Gurney related to his announcement at a news conference last December that \$100,000 had raised been raised in his name without his knowledge. Gurney said at that news conference he was innocent of any wrongdoing in connection with published reports that money had been raised in his name from contractors seeking government work.

He said he learned about the fund raising in mid-1972 and had ordered it stopped. He said he did not report the money to the state at the time because he was not then a candidate for anything and did not have a fund-raising committee.

"The only solution seemed to be to wait until I became a candidate and report the funds then," Gurney said in December. Since declaring his intention to run again, Gurney has said he did not report the contributions because he didn't know who gave them.

Gurney also said the indictment would have a serious impact on his re-election campaign.

"I would fervently hope that both the state court and the prosecutors can cooperate in my effort to bring this matter to a speedy determination because of its paramount political importance," Gurney said.

"A U.S. Senate seat is clearly at stake here."

Gurney charged in the statement that Harris, the state representative who



AP Wirephoto

SENATOR GURNEY
State election law

had asked for the investigation, was a "crony" of Richard Pettigrew, a Democratic state senator from Miami who is seeking his party's nomination to oppose Gurney. He said the charges were initiated as a "political vendetta."

"That's why Harris and Pettigrew started this in hopes that the Democrats won't have to face me this fall," Gurney said. "They can't beat me in a fair and above-board election and they know it; thus they have launched their own political Pearl Harbor attack."

Harris, who appeared before the grand jury last week, denied his action was politically motivated.

Associated Press