

# Watergate Effect on Most Primaries Appears Slight

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON

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WASHINGTON, May 8 — Six states with 100 seats in the House of Representatives have now held Democratic and Republican primaries without a single upset of an incumbent Congressman. So much, politicians were saying today, for the notion that the "ins" are automatically in trouble in this Watergate era of political disenchantment.

The dramatic exception to the pattern was John H. Glenn Jr.'s rematch victory over Senator Howard M. Metzenbaum in Ohio's Democratic primary. By all accounts, the Watergate climate made the difference there.

Peter D. Hart, Mr. Glenn's private pollster, noted today, for example, that on the "competence" issue Mr. Met-

zenbaum scored better than Mr. Glenn in opinion surveys this spring, as he had in their first primary contest in 1970. Yet as soon as Mr. Metzenbaum disclosed last January that he had a \$118,000 dispute with the Government on back tax returns and had paid no taxes at all in 1969, Mr. Hart observed that Mr. Metzenbaum was vulnerable to unappreciated comparisons with President Nixon.

### 'An Overwhelming Factor'

The Watergate background, Mr. Hart argued, "has made integrity an overwhelming factor." He said, "Every one of the revelations about Nixon hurt Metzenbaum."

But if Ohio showed that the Watergate stain could rub off on Democrats as well as Republicans, other results in the first round of 1974 primaries

show that the Watergate effect strikes selectively and, indeed, rarely.

Frances T. Farenthold failed to stir much discontent with Governor Dolph Briscoe in the lackluster Democratic primary in Texas last Saturday. In Alabama, charges of scandal in the highway department and the criminal conviction of the state finance director did not prevent Gov. George C. Wallace from scoring a record 64 per cent majority in the Democratic primary yesterday.

In North Carolina's Democratic primary for the nomination to succeed Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Attorney General Robert Morgan defeated former Representative Nick Galifianakis on the strength of organizational fundamentals — without mention by any candidate of Watergate factors.

### Congressmen Renominated

In Texas, Alabama, Indiana, Ohio and North Carolina, as in the Illinois primaries in March, every member of Congress who sought renomination won it — more often than not against at least a nominal challenge.

In the fall campaigns some Democratic challengers will seek to develop a Watergate issue or a "Nixon connection" against Republican incumbents; some Republicans will try to visit the sins of the Democratic Congress on their individual opponents.

Yet the early primary record suggests that the individuality of political campaigns and the inertial forces in American politics, which have traditionally re-elected about 95 per cent of the Congressional in-

cumbents who run, will be powerful counterweights against any Watergate issue.

There have been few connecting issues in the early primaries. Turnout has also varied greatly, from an unexpected high in Ohio to a notable low in Texas. There are, nonetheless, certain specific effects on national politics in the races so far — and more to come soon in Arkansas's Democratic primary on May 28 between Senator J. William Fulbright and Gov. Dale Bumpers.

### Wallace in National Picture

Governor Wallace, who said in his campaign that "if you are going to be involved nationally it doesn't hurt to be elected Governor," has won approval from his home state to make his fourth bid for the Presidency. His courtship of black votes in Alabama seems to have taken the curse off his old segregationism without alienating his old white base.

Democratic and Republican leaders agree that the nomination of John Glenn gives the Democrats a better chance than they already had to take a long-term hold on the Senate seat vacated last fall when William B. Saxbe — a Republican who defeated Mr. Metzenbaum in 1970 — resigned to become President Nixon's Attorney General. Ralph J. Perk, the Republican Mayor of Cleveland who was nominated yesterday for the Senate, has a strong Republican base in the Democratic stronghold of Cuyahoga County, but Ohio observers expect Mr. Glenn to do more than comparably well among downstate Republicans.