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Vote to Bar

Access to

Tax Returns

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Responding to Watergate disclosures, the Senate voted yesterday to bar executive branch employees from access to federal income tax returns.

The Internal Revenue Service could disclose returns only to the President if he personally asked for them in writing, or to Treasury or Justice Department employees involved in filing or auditing returns.

The provision, by Senator Lowell P. Weicker (Rep-Conn.) was adopted by voice vote and added to a bill setting limits on the number of high-level employees that could be hired by the White House.

Evidence accumulated over the past several months "indicates widespread abuses by White House personnel" in illegally obtaining tax returns of various citizens, Weicker said.

The bill, passed 85 to 3, increases by ten the number of high-level personnel allowed the White House.

The number of persons making the top pay of \$42,500 a year would be raised from 14 to 15; the number at \$40,000 from 21 to 25, and the number at \$36,000 would go from 30 to 35. The Nixon administration had sought an unlimited number at the \$36,000 level.

The bill also places a \$1 million ceiling on the President's "emergency fund." This fund has been authorized in the past to deal with various emergencies "involving the national interest, security or defense."

A similar House-passed bill is more restrictive on the number of White House personnel but sets no ceiling on the emergency fund.

Associated Press