

Impeachment Tide in the

Washington

Important gaps opened yesterday in Southern support for president Nixon's effort to beat impeachment in the House of Representatives.

A survey of key representatives from that region indicated that fewer than half the 74 Southern Democrats in the House may vote with the President.

Meantime, a telephone check of Midwest Republican leaders — another base of Mr. Nixon's strength in the House — indicated there may no longer be any clear advantage for Republican congressmen from that region in voting with the President.

With most northern Democrats expected to favor impeachment, Mr. Nixon's chances of escaping a Senate trial lie in losing no more than 40 of the other 261 House members — 187 of them Republicans and 74 southern Democrats.

Representative Richardson Preyer (Dem-N.C.), one of the more influential of the uncommitted Southerners, said yesterday that the House Judiciary Committee staff and members "have

done a very careful job of fitting the pieces together."

Referring to the pro-impeachment votes of Judiciary members James Mann (Dem-S.C.) and Walter Flowers (Dem-Ala.), Preyer

said, "When people like Mann and Flowers come out for impeachment, it will make it easier for other members from my area who might be inclined to support impeachment. Everyone

knows they aren't secret liberals."

Preyer, who said the televised Judiciary hearings have allowed members to "argue the case with constituents . . . overnight and reach people we couldn't reach if he worked all year at it," predicted pro-impeachment votes out of the Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina delegations.

Representative Gillis Long (Dem-La.), also uncommitted, said votes against the President would likely come from his state, from Georgia, and "possibly even one from Mississippi."

Long said the conduct of the Judiciary Committee had been "exemplary" and "tends to shore up the confidence of people that the matter's being handled fairly."

a formal pledge of support from one of his staunchest Dixie backers, "Representative G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery (Dem-Miss.), who said he found "the evidence is not that strong."

Among the key uncommitted Midwest Republicans, Representative John Erlendson (Rep-Ill.) said he wanted "to take a close look at the criminal charges," perhaps even listening to the tapes himself.

The shifting sands of Midwest Republicanism were indicated by R.L. (Dick) Herman, the Nebraska GOP national committeeman.

Although Senator Carl Curtis (Rep-Neb.) has been among the President's most vocal defenders, Herman said "it's going to be extremely hard for any member" of Nebraska's all-Republican congressional delegation "to cast a vote ei-

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therway. They're not only voting on the President, they're voting on their own political integrity. It's a tough, tough decision for all of them."

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