

NIXON AIMS TO QUIT THE NEW YORK BAR

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But Ethics Inquiry by Panel
Here May Block Move
or Embarrass Him

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 11 — Former President Richard M. Nixon is seeking to resign from the New York State bar, but the process may prove to be complicated and even embarrassing.

The grievance committee of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York has been investigating Mr. Nixon's conduct in the Watergate scandals for nearly a year, to determine if he violated any of the canons of ethics that lawyers, practicing and nonpracticing, are bound to observe.

Under ordinary New York procedures, a lawyer who is under disbarment investigation is not permitted to resign simply by filing a request. Approval by the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court, which oversees professional discipline, is required.

An order by the Appellate Division approving such a resignation may list pending charges against the individual involved, as public notice that he withdrew without any resolution of questions about his professional conduct.

On Monday, one of Mr. Nixon's lawyers said in Sacramento that the former President would resign from the California bar and presented a letter to that effect from Mr. Nixon to the President of the state bar association. That group has also had a disbarment investigation in progress for several months.

The board of governors of the California association then dropped from a resolution condemning President Ford's pardon of Mr. Nixon a pledge that disciplinary proceedings against the former President would be continued.

In response to a question today, Cyrus R. Vance, president of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, issued a statement saying "We have been in conversation with counsel for former President Nixon concerning his possible resignation from the New York bar."

Later, John Bonomi, chief counsel of the association's grievance committee, declined to answer questions about the statement or describe resignation procedures, referring all questions to Mr. Vance, who was reported to be unavailable.

Some California authorities believe that the state Supreme Court there would be unlikely

to accept the resignation of any lawyer who was under investigation for unethical conduct.

Mr. Nixon could possibly have avoided potential professional embarrassment by a simple announcement that he would no longer practice law in California or New York. Chesterfield Smith, outgoing president of the American Bar Association, said last month he did not believe that the former President should be disbarred unless he attempted to resume practice.

The executive committee of the New York association adopted unanimously today a resolution accusing President Ford of acting "prematurely and unwisely" in giving Mr. Nixon a blanket pardon and cautioning against "any further use" of the pardoning power for Watergate defendants.

Mr. Nixon is also a member of the bar of the United States Supreme Court, but officials there said today they had not received any resignation from him. Aside from arguing one case in 1966, his only activity there involved sponsoring for membership John W. Dean 3d, then a White House counsel.