

# GOP Recruitment SUFFERS

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One day last winter in the eastern Michigan city of Saginaw a 34-year-old city councilman was approached by local Republicans who wanted him to run for a soon-to-be-open seat in Congress and replace a veteran House member who was quitting to become a judge.

The district had been Republican for many decades and the councilman, a popular attorney named Thomas F. James, was inclined to make the race. He talked about it with his wife, Mary,

who also liked the idea but had some misgivings.

"Can you defend Nixon?" she asked.

"I don't think I can," James replied.

"Then you'd better not make the race," she said.

Armed with this wise advice, James decided to sit out the election. The Republicans instead came up with a far less attractive candidate, the retiring congressman's former aide, James Sparling. He was narrowly defeated by Democrat J. Bob Traxler in an April special election that gave momentum to growing congression-

al statement for impeachment.

Last week, in a state that has usually been kind to

incumbents, Traxler secured the House seat for himself and for the Democratic Party by soundly defeating the man he had first beaten seven months before.

This year's Republican experience in Saginaw, one of the last industrial strongholds to return majorities regularly for GOP candidates, illustrates the profound impact that former President Nixon and the

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Watergate issue had on the 1974 election long before the campaigns began.

In a nation where ticket-splitting has become a political way of life, candidate recruitment is vital to party success. It is particularly important to the minority Republican Party, which in most states and the vast majority of congressional districts cannot hope to win unless it attracts the votes of independents and some Democrats.

Failure of the GOP to recruit attractive candidates in a year dominated by the Nixon scandals cannot be precisely measured on the voting charts of last Tuesday's election. There are some barometric clues in the dismal Republican performance in House districts with no incumbent in the race. GOP candidates won 12 of 52 races. Democrats gained 14 of the open House dis-

tricts previously held by Republicans while losing only two open districts.

None one will ever know how many prospective Republican candidates like Tom James decided not to run because of Mr. Nixon or how many of them would have been elected if they had run.

However, it is clear that Republicans lost some districts which they might have kept with good candidates and put up inferior candidates in some states where they might have made a good race.

In California, for example, where the Democrats made a net gain of four House seats, the GOP put up weak candidates in normally Republican Orange County and also in Long Beach, where an experienced Republican congressman was retiring.

In Illinois the Republicans were left with the Senate candidacy of George M. Burditt against Adlai Stevenson III after Rep. John B. Anderson, a potentially effective Republican candidate, decided

not to make the race because of Watergate.

And in Missouri, Republican political comer John Danforth decided not to make the race against Democratic Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton. Danforth, the state attorney general, based his decision on a poll of Eagleton's popularity, but it was the kind of race that other Republicans believe Danforth would have made in some other year.

This pattern persisted in Ohio, California, Washington and Idaho, where the GOP put up candidates who were either lesser known or had a more united ideological appeal than other Republican officeholders against Democratic Senate incumbents. In Nebraska and Michigan, popular and progressive GOP lieutenant governors who were outspokenly critical of Watergate quit politics after promising early careers.

The candidate recruitment problem had even deeper impact in state leg-

campaign operating a telephone bank for Milliken. "It was a vote against the Republican Party and against some of the people involved."

This analysis was shared by such national Republican figures as Sen. Charles H. Percy of Illinois and House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes, who survived a strong Democratic challenge in his home state of Arizona.

This was also the conclusion of Republican pollster Robert Teeter of Michigan,

who accurately predicted the voting outcomes in Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

"In the last analysis this year people wanted to vote against somebody," said Teeter. "This was what happened to many Republicans. It was what happened to (Gov. John) Gilligan in Ohio. With Milliken we recognized it in time and ran him like he was running against the incumbent." Gilligan is a Democrat.

The quality candidates who escaped the anti-Republican trend frequently were those who had expressed their independence and displayed their integrity in the face of the Nixon scandals—progressives such as Milliken in Michigan, Sen. Richard S. Schweiker in Pennsylvania and Sen. Charles McC. Mathias in Maryland, and conservatives such as Sen. Barry Goldwater in Arizona.

After the election Schweiker warned that the Republican Party's existence is a precarious one

islatve contests which were swept by the Democrats in many states.

Legislative candidates often are younger than congressional candidates. This time many of the younger prospective Republican candidates passed up 1974 in hope for a more favorable climate next time.

The importance of having a good candidate was illustrated by one Republican who did not wait. In the Michigan 8th Congressional District, the same district

where Republican Tom James decided not to run and where Democrat Bob Traxler was elected, a 22-year-old Republican named Colleen House ran for the state legislative seat Traxler vacated.

Miss House was running in Bay City, the most Democratic portion of the district, against a heavily favored opponent. She waged a door-to-door campaign and won, then came back to win by an even bigger margin last week. Many Bay City voters

split their tickets, voting for Republican Gov. William G. Milliken and Miss House and also for Traxler.

The ability of candidates to appear as attractive alternatives in their own right is particularly important in elections where voters are protesting against the policies of a party or a President—as appeared to be the case last Tuesday.

"I don't think it was so much that the Democrats won," said Tom James in Saginaw, who spent the fall