

Gurney

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Trial Jury

Being Picked

Tampa, Fla.

The bribery-conspiracy trial of former Senator Edward J. Gurney began yesterday with jury selection.

The former Republican member of the Senate Watergate committee, only the sixth U.S. Senator in history to be indicted in office, arrived 20 minutes early for the beginning of the U.S. District Court trial, which could last as long as three months.

U.S. District Judge Ben Krentzman outlined the charges against Gurney, 61, and four co-defendants -- two former aides, James Groot and Joseph Bastien, and two former Housing and Urban Development officials, Ralph Koontz and K. Wayne Swiger.

The judge said all five defendants were charged with conspiracy "to defraud the right to have HUD and its employees free from external implications, influences and pressures."

Two counts charge Gurney alone with seeking and accepting a condominium apartment in Vero Beach, Fla., from developer John Dye in return for favorable consideration by HUD officials of a request for mortgage insurance.

Groot faces three bribery counts and Bastien one, Krentzman said.

Gurney also faces four perjury charges involving his grand jury testimony.

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