

Congress Is Viewed as Unlikely to Meet High

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WASHINGTON, March 8—Despite stepped-up activity, Congress appears unlikely to reach agreement on new changes in the Federal campaign law in time to meet the second deadline imposed by the Supreme Court.

With Senate floor action possible later this week and the House not scheduled to vote until March 17 at the earliest, backers of the move to reconstitute the Federal Election Commission are pessimistic that any legislation can be sent to the White House by the March 22 time limit.

If Congress does not complete action by that date, under two high court rulings, the Federal Election Commission will lose most of its authority, notably the power to authorize payment of Federal subsidies to Presidential candidates for their primary campaigns and national parties for their conventions.

The situation is further complicated by the possibility that President Ford could veto the campaign bill that Congress ultimately produces, forcing a time-consuming compromise on narrower legislation between the White House and Capitol Hill.

Representative Wayne L. Hays, Democrat of Ohio, said today that he hoped the House Administration Committee, which he heads, would finish processing its campaign bill tomorrow. He said last week that the measure was tentatively scheduled for floor debate March 16 and a final vote the next day.

Uncertainty About Senate

Whether the Senate will attempt to tighten up the timetable by passing its version this week is still uncertain. Some senators would prefer to have the House deal first with the politically sensitive issue of campaign subsidies for Congressional elections, certain to be proposed there as a floor amendment.

In the interest of efficiency, the Senate Rules Committee took the virtually unprecedented step of working with

the House draft introduced by Mr. Hays, rather than insisting on its own document. That measure was reported last week and is thus currently available for floor action before the House moves, if Democratic leaders choose this course.

The House and Senate versions of the legislation are both relatively long, more than 45 pages each, and controversial—they are likely to provoke long floor debate because of their complexity and the conviction of most members that they are experts on political campaigning.

The section of both campaign bills that meets the Supreme Court's legal objections to the commission runs less than two

pages. It makes all six members of the commission appointive by the President, clarifying their authority to act as an executive agency.

Additional Provisions Listed

The rest of the bill, as approved by the Senate committee and pending in House committee, would make these other changes:

¶ Provide strict definitions of "independent" political expenditures on behalf of a candidate, for which the Supreme Court removed any dollar ceiling, insuring that they would not be collusively made a part of a limited campaign.

¶ Require the commission to submit for Congressional review within 30 days regulations ap-

plying to all candidates and parties any new ruling embodied in an advisory opinion affecting only the party requesting the advice.

¶ Prohibit commission investigation of alleged campaign law violations based solely on anonymous complaints, require notice to the accused party and give him an opportunity to defend himself, all in private proceedings.

¶ Restrict solicitations by corporations that establish political action committees, designed to make campaign contributions. Funds could be solicited for those committees from stockholders and from top-level employees who are salaried and are involved in supervision and policy-making. The election

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commission has authorized solicitation of all employees.

¶ Limit all political action committee set up by subsidiary companies in a corporation or locals in a labor union to a single collective total of \$5,000 in contributions to a candidate, to prevent evasion of contribution ceilings by proliferation of such committees.

¶ Limit to \$50,000 the amount of his own or his family's money that a Presidential candidate can invest in his own campaign if he accepts Federal subsidies. The Supreme Court struck down such a ceiling as a general matter, but said Congress could impose such limits on those applying for Federal subsidies.

If Congress fails to meet the second Supreme Court deadline,

granted after lawmakers failed to meet the first one March 1, as appears virtually certain, political pressure for accelerated action by the lawmakers will almost certainly be increased.

Presidential candidates will be anxious to cut as short as possible the period during which no campaign subsidies will be available. Even more important, the two national parties will become eligible for another \$500,000 each in convention payments in April, and their chairmen can be expected to lean on Congress accordingly.

Senate Republicans appeared likely to oppose the campaign bill altogether, as going far beyond meeting Supreme Court objections. All three Republicans on the Rules Committee

voted against reporting the measure, calling it "a hodgepodge of unrelated proposals" that weakens the campaign law rather than making needed basic reforms.

The Senate Rules Committee wrote a number of changes into the House bill, including a requirement that a majority vote on policy matters must include at least two Republican and two Democratic members among the six commissioners.

The Senate measure would also exempt from limits on contributions legal and accounting services given to a candidate or political committee to insure compliance with the campaign law. And it would reduce the number of financial reports in off-years and require identifica-

Commission

tion of donor of \$100 or more instead of \$10.

Under the Senate bill, corporate political action committees could solicit, as stockholders, employees who participate in "a stock bonus, stock option or employee stock ownership plan."

The Senate measure would authorize an \$8 million budget for the commission for the 1975-76 fiscal year; the House version makes no mention of such financing. The Senate bill would permit Government employees, including members of Congress, to accept up to \$2,000 for a single speaking fee or article, with an annual honorarium ceiling of \$24,000. The House bill retains the present limits of \$1,000 and \$15,000.