

GOP Election Law Move Killed

Washington

The Senate rejected by one vote yesterday a Republican move to limit revision of the 1974 campaign finance law to a simple restructuring of the Federal Election Commission.

The 47-to-46 tally left the Senate embroiled in an election law battle that could lead to shutting off the federal money spigot for presidential candidates.

The commission will lose its authority to certify candidates eligible for federal grants, and most of its other powers, unless legislation is passed by March 22 to provide for the six commission members to be appointed by the president, subject to Senate confirmation.

The Supreme Court recently ruled that the 1974 law, under which four of the members were appointed by Congress, was an unconstitutional structuring of an agency with executive functions. The court gave Congress until March 22 to rectify the law.

A Democratic bill before the Senate would go far beyond merely providing for presidential appointment of the FEC members. It would make many other significant changes in the campaign finance law, including extending public financing to Senate and House races.

The vote came on a substitute offered by Republican Whip Robert Griffin of Michigan that would have limited the bill to restructuring the commission to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling.

Griffin's substitute was in line with what President Ford has recommended.

The Republicans had hoped that by limiting the bill to a simple restructuring they could block the Democrats from diluting commission rulings regarding corporate campaign committees.

Griffin and other Republicans argued that, with this year's election campaigns already under way, "this is no time to be tampering

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with the election laws."

Mr. Ford has said he will veto any bill "that will create confusion and will invite further delay and litigation."

The House is not scheduled to begin debate on its version of the legislation until next week.

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