

In 1972 Presidential Race

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Unit Says White House Knew Of Try to 'Buy' Chicano Vote

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A Senate Watergate committee report charges that the White House was aware of attempts by La Raza Unida, the militant Chicano rights organization, to obtain Republican campaign funds in return for remaining neutral in the 1972 presidential race.

Allegations about various attempts to "buy" the votes of Spanish-speaking Americans on behalf of President Nixon's election were made in a 140-page report on the so-called White House "responsiveness program." Copies were given to senators on the committee Friday.

The report referred to "... an apparent effort to bribe La Raza Unida, a Texas-based Mexican-American political party, to take neutral stands in the 1972 presidential campaign rather than endorse the candidacy of Sen. (George) McGovern as was anticipated."

In a confidential memo dated Sept. 14, 1972, to Charles W. Colson, White House liaison for special interests groups, Alexa Armendariz, head of the Spanish-speaking voters division in the Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP), said:

"In a private meeting several weeks ago, Gutierrez (Jose Angel Gutierrez, head of La Raza Unida) approached this office for a quiet Republican contribution to La Raza Unida. A promise was made to condemn McGovern if such a donation were made. This pos-

sibility is still under consideration on the grounds that an effort to maintain the neutrality of La Raza Unida is to our advantage."

In a memo to then attorney General John N. Mitchell on Jan. 4, 1972, Jeb Stuart Magruder, the White House aide who was setting up CRP, said that La Raza Unida "has done very well in several state and local elections in California, New Mexico and Texas." He said an attempt to get La Raza Unida to oppose McGovern, who became the Democratic presidential nominee, was a "most interesting suggestion."

The report said Armendariz told the Senate Watergate committee that he did not approve payment of \$8,000, which allegedly was earmarked for the campaign of Ramsey Muniz, La Raza Unida candidate for governor of Texas.

The report also said that in August, 1972, Reyes Lopez Tijerina, a Chicano who led a charge on the courthouse at Rio Arriba, N.M., in 1969 in support of Chicano claims to old Spanish land grants, wrote Henry Ramirez, chairman of a cabinet committee for Spanish opportunities, about an executive pardon. Ramirez in turn wrote Armendariz that "Mr. Tijerina indicated he would work for us in return for due considerations."

"Central to all our efforts (in the Spanish-speaking area)," Magruder said in the

Jan. 4 memo to Mitchell, "should be the full politization of the cabinet committee, now on an \$800,000 budget and going up to \$1.3 million in July."

The Watergate committee report concluded that "perhaps even more destructive of proper government funding than the policy of rewarding friends was the apparent practice of penalizing firms that failed to share the administration's political goals and declined to participate in the president's re-election effort.

"In several instances, the select Watergate committee has uncovered evidence indicating that White House and campaign officials sought to deprive qualified contractors from obtaining tax-funded contracts and grants from the government."