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Governors Praised As Leadership Source

United Press International

The nation has a "remarkable crop" of governors, providing hope for American voters in search of credible leaders in the wake of Watergate, Gov. Thomas P. Salmon of Vermont said here yesterday.

Salmon, a Democrat elected last November in his heavily Republican state, said he felt voters would see "openness in government" as the critical issue in the 1974 mid-term elections and might well look outside Washington in picking national tickets in 1976.

"The American people have a remarkable crop of

governors of both parties—men of truly distinct talent . . .," he told a group of reporters at a breakfast meeting.

He mentioned Democrats Daniel Walker in Illinois, David Hall in Oklahoma, Jimmy Carter in Georgia, Reubin Askew in Florida, Dale Bumpers in Arkansas,

John J. Gilligan in Ohio, Patrick Lucey in Wisconsin and Wendell Anderson in Minnesota.

Among the Republicans, he said, are Ronald Reagan in California, John Love, former governor of Colorado, and New York's Nelson Rockefeller.

Salmon said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) is currently the "strongest" contender for the 1976 Democratic presidential nomination.

He said he feels Tennessee's Republican Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. has benefited most from his membership of the Senate select committee investigating Watergate.

"I don't think there's any question but that Baker is coming across as a lawyer and a statesman of obvious charm and intelligence," Salmon said. "If any one's political star is rising as a result of Watergate, I think he would be the key man."