

# Demo Beats Nixon's Man In Michigan House Race

## GOP Loses Seat Held 42 Years

Saginaw, Mich.

Riding a tide of urban votes, Democrat Bob Traxler captured Michigan's special congressional election yesterday, defeating a Republican for whom President Nixon campaigned.

The 42-year-old Traxler, a lawyer and state representative, became the fourth Democrat this year to capture a House seat long held by the Republicans when he ended the GOP's 42-year hold on Michigan's Eighth District.

He defeated Republican James Sparling Jr., top aide to former Representative James Harvey, by scoring heavily in his Bay City home and winning the city of Saginaw, then withstanding a GOP surge in the Saginaw suburbs and the rural area where Mr. Nixon visited last week.

With all of the district's 296 precincts counted, Traxler had 59,918 votes and Sparling had 56,575. The tally gave Traxler 51.4 per cent of the vote. About 54 per cent of the district's eligible voters cast ballots.

Acknowledging victory while his supporters chanted, "Nixon Must Go," Traxler said his victory means "more good people will be elected in November with the idea of throwing the rascals out and giving good government to the people."

The Democratic candidate had campaigned as much against Mr. Nixon as against Sparling, calling the contest "a referendum on Nixon's policies and moral leadership."

Sparling and state GOP chairman William McLaughlin, who spent most of the

last month here, declined to blame Mr. Nixon for the loss.

"If the campaign was lost," Sparling said, "it was lost by Jim Sparling."

McLaughlin, who blamed  
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the GOP loss of Vice President Gerald R. Ford's old Grand Rapids seat February 18 on Mr. Nixon's handling of the Watergate scandal, said "it's easy to blame the President but I don't know if that's the right thing."

Traxler's victory increases Democratic House strength to 247. There are 187 Republicans and one vacancy, in California, which won't be filled until November.

The results here provided a dismal conclusion for the Republicans to the year's five special congressional contests. All districts had long been Republican, and only one, in California, remained in GOP hands.

Mr. Nixon had stayed out of the four previous races.

Sparling, who worked for Harvey for 13 years, said he will decide within three or four days whether he will run against Traxler in November when the congressman-elect will have to run for a full two-year term.

The defeated Republican said Watergate was "absolutely not" an issue in the campaign.

In previous GOP losses in Ohio and Grand Rapids, post-election surveys showed that opposition to Mr. Nixon's handling of the Watergate scandal and other problems contributed strongly to the outcome.

As a result, some Michigan GOP leaders questioned Sparling's decision to invite Mr. Nixon, though most said after the presidential visit that they thought it had helped.

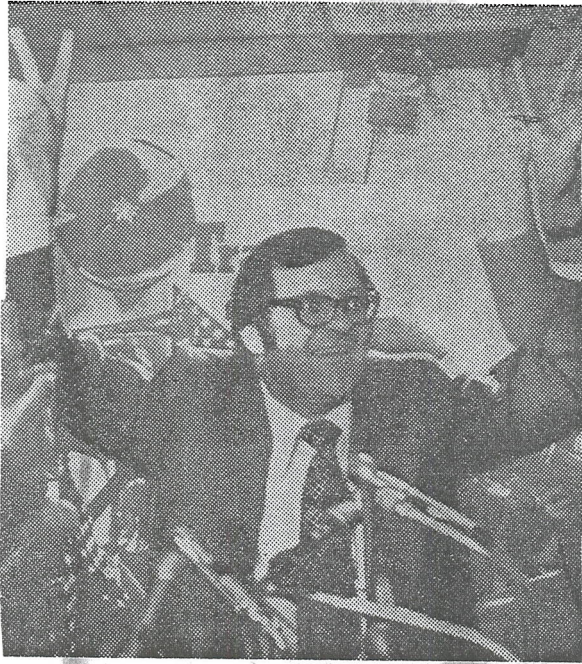
The White House had hoped the result would be a Republican victory that would demonstrate renewed presidential popularity and ease impeachment pressure in the House.

But the 45-year-old Sparling's majority in the Thumb, the region of small towns and farms where Mr. Nixon had campaigned, ran behind that polled by Harvey in 1972.

In Huron county, where the Nixon tour started at Big Axe, Sparling polled about 60 per cent of the vote. However, Harvey scored 75 per cent there in 1972 en route to winning the district with about 60 per cent of the total vote.

Associated Press





*UPI Telephoto*

**BOB TRAXLER LAST NIGHT IN BAY CITY**  
**He gave his supporters the victory sign**



*AP Wirephoto*

**JAMES AND ESTHER SPARRING IN SAGINAW**  
**Loser met newsmen along with his wife**