

SFChronicle
**Gurney Indicted--
Payoff Charges**

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Jacksonville, Fla.

Senator Edward J. Gurney, President Nixon's staunchest supporter on the Watergate committee, was indicted by a federal grand jury yesterday on charges of conspiracy, bribery and lying in connection with political fund raising.

The 33-page indictment was returned in Jacksonville by a 19-member grand jury that has been investigating the case off and on for the past ten months.

The indictment alleges a \$400,000 political "slush fund" raised by Gurney aides in his behalf was collected from Florida builders who were hoping for favored treatment from the Federal Housing Administration and other government agencies.

The maximum penalties for all of the various charges against Gurney totaled 42 years in prison and at least \$80,000 in fines. The fine could be much bigger if the fine for bribery is calculated at three times the amount of the bribe, as provided by law.

Gurney, at a news conference last December 7, denied he had any advance knowledge of the fund raising and said he ordered it halted as soon as he learned of it.

Gurney's office said after the indictment the senator was "unavailable," but issued a brief statement in which Gurney said:

"I maintain my absolute

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innocence of wrongdoing. I have an abiding faith in the American system of justice and I firmly believe that I will be proved innocent of any wrongdoing in this affair.

"I intend to fight this move just as hard as I can

and I will be vindicated."

Named with Gurney in the 11-count indictment were six other defendants, including his former administrative assistant, his executive assistant in Florida, a former Florida state Republican party chairman, a former Florida party treasurer and

two Florida officials of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In first disclosing the indictment in Washington, U.S. Attorney General William B. Saxbe said Gurney, Florida's senior senator, was charged with one count of bribery, one count of conspiracy, one count of receiving unlawful compensation and four counts of making false declarations to a grand jury.

The conspiracy count listed 114 overt acts and said funds totaling \$233,160 were allegedly paid by unindicted co-conspirators either to a Gurney aide or to Gurney-related organizations.

The Senator previously was indicted on a one-count misdemeanor charge of failing to report contributions raised in his behalf, but the charge later was thrown out of court.

Gurney has steadfastly denied any wrongdoing in connection with the fund-raising, claiming he was the victim of a "vicious political attack."

The 60-year-old Gurney is completing his first Senate term and is standing for re-election. He previously served three terms in the House.

He attained national prominence last year as one of three Republican members of the Watergate committee, and the one most sympathetic to the President.

Earlier this year, Gurney was indicted for violating Florida law regarding campaign contributions. However, a county judge tossed out the indictment two



UPI Telephoto

**SENATOR GURNEY
'I will be vindicated'**

weeks later.

The Justice Department said that the maximum penalty for conviction on the bribery count is 15 years in prison and either a \$20,000 fine or a fine of three times the amount of the bribe, whichever is greater.

Indicted with Gurney were James Lee Groot, the Senator's former administrative aide; Joseph Bastien, Gurney's executive assistant in his home office at Winter Park; Earl M. Crittenden of Orlando, former chairman of the Florida GOP; Orlando banker George Anderson, former state GOP treasurer; Wayne Swiger, director of the Tampa HUD office, and Ralph Koontz of Jacksonville, the special assistant to the Florida director of HUD.

The indictment also named 42 other persons as unindicted co-conspirators.

United Press