

is eager to head home

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WASHINGTON — Congress, which hastened its work expecting an impeachment trial, appears ready to leave town for some old-fashioned campaigning and let the nation take a rest from Watergate.

The 93rd Congress, which sped through its calendar in anticipation of impeachment debates and trial, already has passed or will shortly pass most of its essential legislation, including most appropriations bills. It also has left its mark or will shortly do so in such areas as pension and budget reform.

The pressure, therefore, is off for now.

But the pressure is on back home where all 435 members of the House and one-third of the Senate must face an election.

The lawmakers must learn whether the voters are pleased or angered by presidential resignation, are swayed toward the Republican camp by a fresh new face in the White House or believe all incumbents are corrupt.

For weeks now, both houses have been acting as if Christmas recess was coming, meeting a full five days and some nights.

Now that impeachment is moot, the House plans to take off two weeks for Labor Day and the Senate one week. The House also likely will take off most of October; and the Senate, which had planned to be into an impeachment trial then, may do likewise.

The post-resignation mood of Congress appears to be "Let's go home."

"What the country needs is for all of us to get out of Washington and let the country have a breath of fresh air," said Assistant Senate Democratic Leader Robert Byrd of West Virginia.

"We should just pack it up and say we'll be back in January," said an aide to the Senate Republican leadership.

That mood could change if President Ford calls for a push to enact major legislation in his address to a joint session of Congress tomorrow, but that is unlikely. Ford needs time to formulate a legislative program and to decide whether he wants some of the major bills now pending.

He likely would want to start fresh with a new Congress in January, and in the meantime concentrate on being certain that Republican incumbents are not swept out on an anti-Watergate tide.