

# WXPost MAY 14 1975 GSA Plan on Nixon Papers Opposed

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Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D Wis.) yesterday urged Congress to reject a proposal by the General Services Administration under which former President Nixon's White House tape recordings and papers would be made public.

Nelson told a Senate committee that many of GSA's proposed regulations "are clearly inconsistent with the letter and the spirit" of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act, which Nelson sponsored and Congress enacted in December.

Nelson particularly criticized a provision that would give GSA Administrator Arthur F. Sampson, a Nixon appointee, final decision-making authority on what Watergate

and other Nixon White House materials should be released.

The Wisconsin Democrat also charged that exemptions GSA has proposed under which Nixon White House materials would be kept private are too broad and "could mean that the public would be denied access to vast amounts of material which should not be kept secret."

Under the new law on the Nixon White House's tapes and papers, Congress has only 90 legislative days—until late summer or early fall—to approve substitute regulations for releasing the material, or the proposed GSA rules automatically will take effect.

Nixon has challenged the constitutionality of the new law, suing to require enforcement, instead, of a prior agreement GSA made with the former President that would allow him to retain title to the White House tapes and papers and to deny public access to them.

Sampson yesterday predicted that full-scale processing of the Nixon White House materials won't start till late 1976 and "it will most likely be 1977 before the public has access to many well-known Watergate materials."

"Our plans contemplate that virtually all information relating to the abuse of governmental power will be fully processed by 1980," Sampson said in discussing GSA's proposal to spend \$7 million for a staff of 100 to catalogue 42 million pages of Nixon White House documents and 880 reels of tape that occupy 35,000 cubic feet of space.

Court orders at present prevent any cataloguing of the Nixon tapes and papers pending a final court decision on the former President's suit. The court will rule whether the materials are largely public, as Congress contends in the new law, or private, as Nixon maintains.

Nelson told the senate Government Operations Committee, "Having a political appointee make the final determination with respect to the retention and public availability of the materials poses serious risks. . . . The decisions on the Nixon materials should be made to the extent possible, by a nonpartisan group."

Sampson said GSA's proposal includes sufficient safeguards to prevent politically motivated decisions in regard to which Nixon White House materials will be released. He said a three-member panel of professional archivists, would be much more fully involved

than the GSA administrator, who probably would be called to rule on access in only a small fraction of disputed cases.

Nelson criticized the proposed exemption of material "When the release of those portions would tend to embarrass, damage or harass living persons." He said, "Almost by definition, the Watergate affairs are embarrassing to those who were associated with them."

Nelson also criticized a provision to prevent public access to the materials if such release "would disclose or compromise national security classified information." He said all nonclassified materials should be made public.

"We basically have a semantic difficulty," said Sampson in responding to these objections.

Sen. Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.), committee chairman, said decisions on releasing the Nixon White House materials probably will set precedents for future presidents. "We've got the responsibility to treat Mr. Nixon as fairly as we would treat any subsequent President," Ribicoff said.

Committee members agreed to urge prompt appointment of a 17-member commission that the new law creates to recommend long-range policy on release of federal officials' records.