

Watergate a Blooming Issue

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President Nixon's announcement last Tuesday that "major developments" had come to light in the Watergate case occurred at a time when the issue has become of such widespread concern that it could seriously affect GOP fortunes in next year's congressional races.

Specifically, the latest na-

tionwide Gallup survey (completed prior to the President's announcement) revealed that:

- Watergate, a "non-issue" in last fall's presidential campaign, has now become familiar to an extraordinary number of Americans.

- Nearly one-third of all persons in the survey felt that the Watergate affair reveals corruption in the Nixon administration.

- Half the people aware of Watergate — four in ten in all — expressed the belief that President Nixon knew about the Watergate situation in advance.

- A significant percentage called for a "clearing of the air" by the President regarding the events surrounding the Watergate affair.

The first survey question sought to determine present level of awareness. A total of 83 per cent said they had heard or read about Watergate — up 31 percentage points from a survey conducted last October during the presidential campaign.

This is a surprisingly high awareness figure, even considering the attention given Watergate by the media.

More people at the time of the survey believed President Nixon knew in advance about the Watergate situation than felt that he did not — 41 per cent to 32 per cent. The other 27 per cent either did not express an opinion or had not heard or read about Watergate.

Of political significance is the fact that not only did Democrats by a wide margin think Mr. Nixon knew about the affair in advance, but independents leaned to this view as well. Even among Republicans, one in five thought Mr. Nixon had prior knowledge.

Following are the questions and findings, based on the total sample:

Do you think President Nixon knew about the Watergate situation in advance, or not?

	Knew	Didn't Know	No Opinion Not Heard
NATIONAL	41%	32%	27%
Democrats	51	24	25
Republicans	21	50	29
Independents	42	32	26

Approximately a third of persons in the survey said

the Watergate affair is a serious matter because it reveals corruption in the Nixon administration, while a majority — 53 per cent — described the affair as "just politics — the kind of thing both parties engage in."

Most inclined to think that Watergate reveals corruption are Democrats and persons in the survey who felt that Mr. Nixon knew in advance about Watergate.

Following are the question and results:

Which of these two statements comes closer to your point of view about Watergate? — It's a very serious matter because it reveals corruption in the Nixon administration; or, it's just politics — the kind of thing that both parties engage in.

	Corruption Reveals	Politics Just	Not Heard Opinion
NATIONAL	31%	53%	16%
Republ'ns.	13	67	20
Democrats	42	42	16
Independ't.	31	56	13
Those saying Nixon knew in advance	51	41	8
Those saying Nixon did not	18	73	9

A total of 1528 adults, 18 and older, were interviewed in person in this survey, which was conducted in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period April 6-9.

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Over — Nixon Popularity Drops in Poll