

Connally Will Switch to GOP

Washington

Former Treasury Secretary John B. Connally will declare his formal conversion to the Republican party today, informed sources have told the Los Angeles Times.

The switch, to be an-

nounced at a Houston press conference, would clear the way for the former Democratic governor of Texas to make a bid for the GOP presidential nomination in 1976.

Connally is expected to couple his pledge of alle-

giance to the GOP with a "ringing defense" of President Nixon, now undergoing one of the most serious crises of his presidency as a result of the Watergate scandal.

Political observers have speculated that Connally has

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delayed changing parties, a move he was expected to make weeks ago, because he has been weighing the political impact of Watergate.

He has decided to act now, friends believe, in part because he feels that his announcement, coming during

one of the Nixon administration's darkest hours, would be particularly appreciated by Republicans.

A onetime close associate of Lyndon B. Johnson, and Democratic governor of Texas from 1963 to 1969, Connally joined the Nixon

cabinet as Treasury Secretary in 1971. He resigned last June to practice law in Houston and to serve as chairman of Democrats for Nixon during the 1972 campaign.

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