

Nixon Plea on Election Reform

Washington

President Nixon, citing "widespread abuses during the presidential campaign of 1972," urged Congress yesterday to create a bipartisan commission to recommend sweeping federal election reforms.

In a special message, Mr. Nixon called for establishment of a 17-member Non-partisan Commission on Federal Election Reform to conduct a broad post-Watergate study and come up with specific legislative recommendations by December 1.

"The commission's mandate would be as broad as the federal process itself," said Mr. Nixon. "Nothing would be excluded."

While the President made no direct reference to the Watergate scandal, he predicted many more disclosures of 1972 campaign misdeeds "will doubtless soon be made."

'ESSENTIAL'

Terming the need for reform "essential and urgent" Mr. Nixon said in a companion address taped for radio broadcast that changes are needed "that will help to restore the faith of the American people in the integrity of their political processes."

Among the matters Mr. Nixon suggested as areas worthy of commission consideration were limiting a President to a single nonrenewable six-year term and electing House members, who now serve two years, to four-year terms. Both would

require a constitutional amendment.

Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield termed the commission idea "a step in the right direction." He joined Senate Republican Leader Hugh Scott and Senator Robert P. Griffin (Rep.-Mich.), the assistant minority leader, in introducing the measure to create the commission Mr. Nixon recommended.

PROVIDE

Mansfield also introduced a constitutional amendment to provide for a single, six-year term for a president, as he has done several times in the past. Scott said he thought a seven-year term would be preferable and urged that a four-year House term, with half of the members elected each year, be made part of the proposed amendment.

House Speaker Carl Albert (Dem.-Okla.) said he has not made up his mind about the commission. House Republican Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan urged prompt approval.

In a related development, the Senate Commerce Committee approved a bill limiting presidential campaign spending to 25 cents per voter and coordinating contributions and spending through only one place — the national committee of political parties.

Senator Howard W. Cannon (Dem.-Nev.) chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, said it probably would be about the second week in June before any hearings

could be held on setting up the commission.

Discussing the proposed commission's mandate in his radio talk, Mr. Nixon said:

MANDATE

"It will be authorized to examine the costs and financing of campaigns, and look into the various ways in which the costs can be kept down and improper influence or influence - seeking through large campaign contributions can be ended.

"It can consider limitations on the total amounts candidates can spend, recognizing both the potential for abuse and the heavy burden that high campaign costs impose on both parties.

"It can look into the laws governing disclosure of campaign funds and how they are spent, and how both those laws and their enforcement might be improved.

"It can review the tax laws as they relate to the financing of political campaigns and can look into the question of possible public funding of campaigns.

"Other areas for inquiry would include the elimination from our election campaigns of violence and the threat of violence; of intimidation; of frauds in the casting and counting of ballots; of the throwing about of misleading or malicious charges; of sabotage and espionage and other infringements on the rights of privacy; and of the whole range of improper campaign practices."

Congress would appoint

eight of the bipartisan commission members, four Democrats and four Republicans divided evenly between House and Senate. The chairmen of the Democratic and Republican National Committees also would serve. The President would appoint seven public members, with no more than four to be members of the same party.

"To further ensure its complete independence," said Mr. Nixon "the chairman and vice - chairman would be selected from the members of the commission by the commission itself."

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