

Campaign Cash Limit OK'd

Washington

The Senate approved yesterday a \$50 limit on cash contributions to political campaigns and stiff criminal penalties for illegal diversion of funds by candidates or their aides.

The two provisions, clearly stemming from the Watergate scandal, were added to a comprehensive campaign reform bill by voice vote.

Having adopted Thursday a \$3000 limit on campaign contributions by individuals, the Senate was in no mood to lower the ceiling any more. With a minimum of discussion, it rejected an amendment by Senator Philip A. Hart (Dem-Mich.) that would have placed the limit at \$1000 with an overall ceiling of contributions by an individual of \$15,000 in any one year.

Senator Lawton Chiles (Dem-Fla.), sponsor of the \$50 cash limit, told the Senate that "if this amendment

is adopted there will be no occasion to have suitcases full of cash contributions."

All contributions over \$50 would have to be by check or other written instrument under the terms of the legislation.

Senator Howard W. Cannon (Dem-Nev.), the bill's floor manager, reluctantly accepted the \$50 ceiling instead of the \$100 limit originally in the measure. "Suitcases full of \$100 bills didn't come from small contributors but from big contributors," he said.

"The danger doesn't come from the person who is going to give one \$100 bill," Cannon said.

Also adopted was an amendment providing maximum penalties of ten years in jail and a \$25,000 fine for any candidate convicted of embezzling, converting to his personal use or hiding campaign contributions.

The amendment's sponsor, Senator Robert C. Byrd

(Dem-W. Va.) said Watergate has had "a chilling effect on the American political system."

"This amendment would assure that any political contribution made to the party or the candidate of one's choice would be used for the intended purpose for which it was given — lawful political activity," Byrd said.

Byrd's amendment would specifically forbid the use of campaign money to pay legal fees for defendants in criminal trials.

For the second day a reform-minded Senate continued to tighten provisions of the campaign bill, which also has a candidate spending ceiling of 20 cents per voter in the general election and 15 cents a voter in the primaries, and provision for an independent federal elections commission with subpoena powers to oversee elections.

United Press