

Hill Tentatively Selects Panels for Hearings

The Senate Rules Committee and the House Judiciary Committee were tentatively chosen by congressional leaders yesterday to handle hearings on the next vice presidential nominee.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.), after meeting with GOP leaders and senior members of key committees, told reporters, "In my judgment, without question, it is the Rules Committee under the rules" which has jurisdiction over questions of vice presidential succession.

Mansfield stressed that he hadn't definitely decided to give the matter to the Rules Committee, but he clearly was leaning strongly in that direction.

"This is the first time it's happened and we're feeling our way" on procedure, said Mansfield, who also announced that the planned Oct. 12-29 Senate recess is being called off because of the crisis of vice presidential succession.

Without indicating he had made a final decision, House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.), who is next in line for the presidency should anything happen to President Nixon, said that "under the House rules, the nomination should go to the Judiciary Committee."

The 25th Amendment to the Constitution, approved six years ago, provides that whenever the vice presidency is vacant, the President shall nominate a successor who "shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both houses" of Congress. It doesn't provide any other guidelines and there were numerous proposals yesterday for

joint House-Senate hearings and questions as to which chamber should act first on the nomination.

The procedure that apparently will be followed, although this could change overnight since leaders are to meet again today on the question, is that the nomination will be referred to the Senate Rules and House Judiciary committees, and that after each committee has studied the nomination and made its recommendations, the Senate and House will each take a separate vote on the nomination.

Unless there is some specific agreement between House and Senate leaders, either chamber could act first—whichever is ready to do so first.

There is some support for creation of a special committee in the Senate to handle the nomination in place of the Rules Committee, and Sen. Birch Bayh (D-Ind.), whose Judiciary subcommittee handled the vice-presidential succession amendment, will press Mansfield today for a special or select committee. But Mansfield seemed strongly in favor of the Rules Committee after yesterday's conference.

There is no bar to the House and Senate holding joint hearings if they choose, or appointing a special committee or committees, and Mansfield indicated many alternatives had been discussed among Senate leaders yesterday without an absolute decision. But he said repeatedly that the Senate rules seemed to indicate that the Senate Rules Committee has jurisdiction over succession matters.