

# Kennedy Seeks Ford Pledge on Tapes

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Senator Edward M. Kennedy said today that Congress should refuse to confirm Gerald R. Ford as Vice President unless he states that President Nixon should obey court orders to release White House tapes.

The Senator's stand reflects the view of a small but growing number of Democrats that the tapes issue is closely allied to Congressional action on Mr. Ford's confirmation.

President Nixon has until tomorrow to appeal a United States Court of Appeals ruling that he turn over to the Federal District Court the tape recordings that possibly bear on crimes associated with the Watergate affair.

Mr. Ford said yesterday that he felt that Mr. Nixon should, from the standpoint of politics, release the tapes, but he added that he also recognized "that serious legal and constitutional issues are involved."

## Elaboration Offered

Mr. Ford said that he would be willing to explain further his views on the tapes issue during his confirmation hearings by Senate and House committees.

Some members of Congress have said publicly in recent days that the Ford confirmation should be delayed until the tapes issue has been resolved. Some have also called for impeachment of the President if the Supreme Court orders release of the tapes and he continues to withhold them.

Senator Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat, stopped short of either of these suggestions in his prepared statement

today. Instead, he said that Mr. Ford's confirmation should rest, at least in part, on whether he acknowledged that the rule of law is supreme.

"However distinguished his career may be, however acceptable his other qualifications may be, if Mr. Ford refuses to acknowledge the obligation of the President to obey the Supreme Court, then Congress has the right and duty to refuse his confirmation," Senator Kennedy said.

Senator Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the Senate Republican whip, promptly took issue with Senator Kennedy.

"That should not be a condition for confirming a Vice President," Senator Griffin said.

Senator Griffin said, however, that he also believed that President Nixon should "voluntarily make the tapes available" and that he would "expect the

President to comply" if so ordered by the Supreme Court.

While arguing that the Ford confirmation should not be keyed to the tapes issue, several other Republicans have also asked, in recent days, that the President release the tapes. Among them are two Nixon loyalists, Representatives John N. Erlenborn, an Illinois conservative, and Bill Frenzel of Minnesota.

Meanwhile, the Senate Rules Committee, at a closed session today, worked on procedures for confirmation hearings that may begin the week of Oct. 29. Senator Howard W. Cannon of Nevada, chairman of the committee, said that its hearings would be open but would not provide "a forum for those who can't back up charges against the nominee."