

## Public Voice in Presidential Succession

To the Editor:

The 25th Amendment, our current law of Presidential succession, is the creature of a Congress whose competence was questionable but whose self-interest this very law makes obvious. For three or four decades (with the exception of a brief period under Eisenhower) Congress has been in the hands of a highly partisan Democratic majority. This majority figures it will exist for years to come, and with it the illogic and unfairness of this law, to say nothing of its dangers.

The process of choosing a new President in the event of the removal or loss of the elected President and Vice President should be in the hands of the electorate. The Speaker of the House and his potential successor in the Senate are elected officials, true, but their constituency is narrow and regional. And the Congressmen who placed them in this position of succession are only a few hundred professional politicians, largely of the majority party. They are not the American people, who elected the President that the House Speaker is in line to replace.

A minority-party President (and Vice President) could conceivably be intimidated by the Congress, as the threat of removal will always be there

for future Presidents even if Mr. Nixon is not impeached and removed. The idea is now out in the open, and future Congressional leaders will surely read these possibilities, not to say that the framers of our current law haven't already read them.

What we need is an amendment to this law, to wit: The current line of succession may remain as it is, but the period of service of an "Emergency President" may last for only sixty days after the removal or loss of both President and Vice President, which should be enough time for both parties to present candidates to the people for an "Emergency Election."

If the House Speaker (or "Emergency President") were of Presidential quality, he could be chosen to run for the office to complete the balance of the term. More often than not, the position of Speaker has been an honorary one, and its occupants have been obscure nationally, frequently elderly and of the same questionable competence as the makers of our current law. Who was the last Speaker of the House to run for the Presidency?

The people deserve a President of their choosing. The choice of fewer than 300 Democratic Congressmen is far from democratic. EDWARD ROBBINS  
Englewood, N. J., Oct. 30, 1973