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Nixon Sees Hill Republicans On Watergate This Week

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The White House announced yesterday that President Nixon will meet with every Republican member of Congress this week for full discussions of the Watergate case and related matters.

Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.) was the first to disclose that the meetings had been planned, and he indicated they would include both Republican and Democratic members of Congress. But the White House said that, "for the purpose of the meetings next week, only Republican senators and representatives will attend."

A White House spokesman said the President is expected to meet with at least some Democratic leaders in the weeks ahead, but that "he will take care of the Republicans first."

The spokesman said the GOP congressmen will be free to ask questions and pursue all Watergate-related matters during the talks.

The meetings are set to begin Tuesday and will run through Thursday.

Mr. Nixon will hold six separate meetings, two on each day, to accommodate the 234 Republican congressmen. Morning breakfast sessions are scheduled for the talks with House Republicans, and in the afternoon the President will confer with Senate Republicans.

The afternoon meetings will be held in the White House library, where the setting will be less formal than that of the President's office.

The White House spokesman said the President wants "full and open communications" with the Republican congressmen, and he indicated that the talks will range over all Watergate-related matters.

Percy disclosed the pending talks in an appearance of the television program "Meet the Press" (NBC, WRC), and the White House later confirmed them.

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The announcement came after growing indications last week that the President was prepared to take his case to Congress and the public. Reports surfaced that Mr. Nixon was willing to make public the controversial Watergate tapes if the courts would agree to their release.

In disclosing the forthcoming meetings, Percy said they mark "the beginning of full and total disclosure" of White House dealings in the Watergate affair. Percy said full disclosure or impeachment are the only alternatives the President has left for himself, having repeatedly ruled out the possibility of resigning.

"The question now is how to protect this presidency, and the only way is full disclosure," Percy said. "I think it is a high priority to protect the office of the presidency."

In a later telephone interview, Percy said he expects the talks to be conducted "with no holds barred. I expect them to be candid and fully open."

Percy said he plans to ask "those questions of the President that I, and other members of Congress, have been receiving in the mail." In particular, he said, he will ask for a "clarification" of the promises and powers granted by the President to newly named Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon A. Jaworski.

Percy said those Republican senators who serve on the special Watergate investigating committee will "be in the most favorable position to probe the President on the substantive questions of Watergate."

Likely topics at the meetings include the President's campaign financing methods, reports of alleged favoritism toward heavy Republican contributors, the operations of the so-called "plumbers" unit, and the 1972 break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters.

At least nine hours will be spent by the President being interrogated by members of Congress," Percy said.

The White House said some invitations to Republican congressmen have already gone out but that the question of which congressmen will attend specific meetings has not yet been decided.