

Rep. Ford Assailed By Rights Leaders On Voting Record

By Spencer Rich
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two of the nation's top civil rights leaders charged yesterday that vice presidential nominee Gerald R. Ford has repeatedly voted to cripple civil rights legislation during his 25 years in Congress.

"He has voted over and over again to gut or weaken legislation which was in the interests of minorities," said Joseph L. Rauh, opposing the Ford nomination on behalf of Americans for Democratic Action at a Senate Rules Committee hearing yesterday.

NAACP legislative chief Clarence Mitchell said the Michigan congressman "has consistently tried to gut" civil rights legislation and programs to help the poor. Mitchell neither opposed nor supported the nomination, but he said Ford has voted "wrong" on 26 of 54 key civil rights votes since 1949. He said Ford usually first tries to weaken or nullify the legislation, "and after he fails he then votes for the final version."

Committee Chairman Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.) said that he doesn't expect the committee to vote until "early next week" at best on the nomination, and "floor action may not come" until after the Nov. 21-26 Thanksgiving recess. Cannon said one or two investigative reports on Ford are still to come in, and he doesn't want to rush to a vote until the record is complete. However, Republicans may press for a quick vote at an executive meeting of the committee today.

In the House, which must also approve Ford's nomination by majority vote, the Judiciary Committee begins its hearings today. They are to continue while the House takes its recess starting tonight.

While the soft-spoken Mitchell, dean of civil rights lobbyists, confined his criticism to Ford's civil rights votes, Rauh blasted the nominee for "votes against food stamps, legal services and child care, minimum wages, education, Medicare, OEO, public housing, public works programs and rent subsidies."

Rauh also accused Ford of "extreme partisanship and reckless disregard of constitutional principles," as well as deliberate distortion of the views of Supreme Court

Justice William O. Douglas in an attempt to impeach him.

Ford was also opposed yesterday by Rep. Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.), who said, "I call on this committee to defer action on the nomination until there is a congressional decision on impeachment (of the President) and until there is consideration of legislation creating a special election" for the presidency.

George Washington University law professor John F. Banzhaf III said there is strong evidence that the Nixon administration with a view toward reaping political benefits for the President, had maneuvered in an irregular and illegal fashion to force the resignation of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew. Banzhaf said the Senate should not allow Mr. Nixon to reap the benefit of such "official misconduct" by approving the man Mr. Nixon hand-picked as Agnew's successor, until the Rules Committee investigate the way Agnew was ousted.

Support for Ford came from Maurice Dawkins, spokesman for Opportunities Industrialization Centers, which help raise public and private funds for training and job placement for the poor.

Sen. Robert P. Griffin (R-Mich.), seeking to counter the statements of Rauh and Mitchell, read a letter from the black mayor of Grand Rapids, Ford's hometown, endorsing Ford, and an Oct. 12 statement from United Auto Workers President Leonard Woodcock endorsing the nomination.

Rauh, former UAW attorney, said Woodcock wants Ford approved on the theory, that will make it easier to impeach President Nixon, but conceded he wasn't officially speaking for the union president on that.

Mitchell told the committee that this year on issues important to black people Ford had voted to weaken the minimum wage bill, to kill or cut poverty funds and to weaken the District of Columbia home rule bill, though he did vote for final passage.

Chairman Cannon said no more witnesses are scheduled, but didn't preclude further hearings if needed to clear up disputed points.

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CLARENCE MITCHELL



JOSEPH L. RAUH

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