

# GOP Leadership Sees Nixon on '74

By Carroll Kilpatrick and Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writers

Republican leaders talked 1974 politics with President Nixon yesterday and emerged with optimistic predictions that Watergate would not be a principal issue.

At the same time, a gloomier political picture was painted by a high-ranking GOP political strategist, who said that seven of the 15 Republican-held U.S. Senate seats that will be up for election next year could be lost.

And on the House side, John Calkins, executive director of the House Republican Campaign Committee, described the prospects as "on the bleak side."

"There's no question that the Watergate climate has downgraded immediate prospects, although a lot can happen by next year," Calkins said. "Many Democrats were worried that they would be dragged down by George McGovern and found they didn't have much to worry about."

Recent findings by pollster George Gallup suggest that voters may be ready to take Watergate out on the Republican Party as a whole. This view received some confirmation in special elections held last week in North Dakota, where Demo-

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crats were hoping to make slight gains.

Instead, Democrats won all five state legislative seats that were at stake, four of which had been held by Republicans. There were few issues in the campaign, and political analysts on both sides said that Watergate was a factor.

But the political leaders who met with President Nixon said there was no talk of Watergate during their 45-minute political discussion at the White House. Republican National Chairman George Bush, Senate GOP Campaign Committee Chairman William E. Brock and House Campaign Committee Chairman Robert H. Michel of Illinois said the discussion centered on candidates and the election-year economy.

The GOP congressional campaign leaders said that the President's assistance in the campaign would be more helpful in the South and Midwest than in other areas.

They freely acknowledged that his presence would not be requested by Republican campaigners in some parts of the country.

Brock said "there is no question as to the effect of Watergate — we have been severely wounded."

But Brock said, "we have been beating that horse for

a long time." The really decisive issues in next year's elections will be jobs, the economy and the prospect of war or peace, he said.

Asked if his job of trying to elect Republicans would not be easier if the President resigned, Brock said that would be "a disservice to the country and would shatter the people's faith in our system."

Michel said Mr. Nixon gave the leaders "a great deal of hope that the economy would be in reasonably good shape next year."

In 1958, Republicans lost heavily in House and Senate races because of a recession, Michel said. The most important issue in 1974, he said, will be the economy.

Bush reported that he had found in his travels "a mounting growing feeling of 'get off his back' syndrome" as far as the President and Watergate are concerned.

But he said he still favored full disclosures on all controversial issues and felt that the sooner disclosures could be made the better.

The Senate rundown provided by the GOP strategist on the 1974 elections showed incumbent Republican senators in trouble in Florida, Kansas and North Dakota. The Democrats also will be favored in Kentucky if Sen. Marlow Cook retires, and are considered to have a chance to win even if he seeks re-election.

Additionally, Democrats are thought to have a chance for seats being vacated by Republican incumbents in Ohio and Utah, and a solid opportunity to win in Vermont if George Aiken retires. The seat is considered safe Republican if

Aiken seeks re-election.

Democratic seats in Alaska and North Carolina are believed in jeopardy, and Republicans are also given a chance to win in Connecticut and Indiana and in the vacant seat in Nevada if former Gov. Paul Laxalt runs.

This rundown, admittedly preliminary, would result in the Republicans losing ground in the Senate, where the GOP is now outnumbered 57 to 43. In his meeting with reporters Brock said he would be content if the GOP held its own or gained two seats.

There is no comparable district-by-district rundown available in the House, where Democrats now hold a 243-to-191 edge with one vacancy.

But the extent of GOP difficulty is shown in Pennsylvania, where the Democrats are given a chance to win the seat held for 13 terms by the late John P. Saylor, a Republican.

"If we didn't have all these troubles coming out of Washington, we'd have no trouble winning," local GOP leader Andrew Gleason said yesterday, according to the New York Times.

In North Dakota, the Democrats won a special election seat in Grand Forks, a GOP stronghold where the Republican candidate was Justin Holberg, the president-elect of the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce. He was defeated by Mrs. Douglas Irving, 29, a law student at the University of North Dakota.

Turnout was light in all of the North Dakota districts.