

GOP's Michigan Loss

THE WATERGATE HORRORS have made a winner out of a lifetime Democratic loser in Michigan's fifth congressional district, and since that was Republican Gerald Ford's territory till he became vice president, Mr. Ford can hardly be blamed for seeming "stunned" in the eyes of the AP when he was told about the result of Monday's special election to choose his successor.

The fifth district, in and around Grand Rapids, has sent Republicans to the House in an unbroken line since 1910. Thus Richard VanderVeen, who won over the Republican favorite, Robert VanderLaan, is a rude intruder on hallowed GOP turf. In many years of trying, VanderVeen had never made it to victory in any election. Ford beat him with over 60 per cent of the vote in 1958. So his win over a man who the Michigan Republican organization thought was sure to take 55 per cent of Monday's vote with ease, is surely significant for Politics 1974.

Winner VanderVeen says it's significant of Watergate and the "moral bankruptcy of Richard Nixon." In the campaign, he had repeatedly called on the President to resign. His assessment of Watergate difficulties for the Republicans in this mid-term year could be taken as self-serving if it were not for the fact that the Republican State chairman, William McLaughlin, agrees with it. "Watergate killed us," he said. "We got our Republicans out, and that's a Republican district. Without a doubt there is a message."