

GOP Shaken by Michigan Loss

Washington

The loss Monday of vice president Gerald Ford's former congressional seat to a Democrat left Republicans badly shaken yesterday.

Democrats meanwhile jubilantly predicted landslide victories for their party this fall.

Ford admitted that he was just a little bit "frightened" by the election outcome.

George Bush, Republican national chairman, said he is "concerned." And rank and file House Republicans were clearly jolted at the loss of what they had thought was a "safe" Republican seat.

For the first time some of the top-ranking Republican leaders conceded that the Watergate matter may indeed be a major factor in this year's elections.

For months, Republican leaders had been discounting suggestions that the Watergate scandals might rub off on their party's congressional candidates this year.

But as returns from the Michigan race began pouring in Monday night, Ford conceded that "to some extent, it (Watergate) had an impact."

The vice president had just addressed a gathering of engineers in Chattanooga, Tenn., when news of the election outcome reached him.

Delaying his departure for more than an hour, Ford conferred by telephone with officials in Washington and Michigan before entering his plane — part of the White House fleet — to talk to newsmen.

"Well, it's a beating," he said dejectedly. "I'm very upset."

Earlier in the day, at a

news conference in Chattanooga, Ford had predicted victory for the Republican nominee, Robert Vander-

Lann, against Richard F. VanderVeen, the Democrat.

VanderVeen, who had made Watergate the focus of his campaign, said last night that his main goal as a freshman representative will be to try to remove President Nixon from office.

The Fifth District had been a safe Republican seat since 1910, and Ford had usually won 60 per cent or more of the votes in elections to that seat during the last 25 years.

While saying Monday night that Watergate had an

impact on the election, Ford made no direct mention of the Watergate scandals in a more formal statement yesterday. He attributed the Democratic victory to "the temporary turmoil plaguing Michigan's economy," heavy spending by the Democrats, failure of Republicans to turn out at the polls and "skepticism prevalent about politics today."

In contrast to the Republicans' gloom, Democrats welcomed the Michigan victory as an indication that Watergate was a major factor in this year's elections.

"I'd call it a landslide vote for President Ford," said Representative John Brademas of Indiana, deputy Democratic whip.

New York Times



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Newly-elected Congressman Richard VanderVeen was hugged by his wife after ending 64 years of GOP rule in Michigan's 5th district.