

It may be Watergate, if anyone's

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VENTURA—If the special election in the 13th Congressional is a major Watergate test; somebody ought to tell the voters in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties before it's too late.

The election is Tuesday and some forecasters say the turnout at the polls may be as small as 30 percent of the registration.

A gauge of public interest was Wednesday's candidate night in the civic auditorium at Oxnard, a Democratic stronghold. On the platform were the one Republican and seven Democrats running to succeed the late Rep. Charles M. Teague (R. - Santa Paula).

At the lectern, Democratic hopeful James Browning, an Oxnard lawyer, smiled gratefully at the audience of 98 persons:

"Thank you," he said. "This is the largest crowd that has turned out to hear this panel in the campaign."

Mercifully, the campaign has been short. Governor Reagan called the election Jan. 8 to fill the last year of Teague's term. Teague died Jan. 1 after 19 years in Congress.

The Democrats have been pushing hard on Watergate, hoping for a turnaround like that in the Michigan Fifth where a Democrat took the district held for 25 years by Gerald Ford.



Lagomarsino

Loebel

Jolicoeur

Their target is the Republican candidate, State Sen. Robert J. Lagomarsino, 47. He is favored to win, either

listening

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Tuesday, if he can get a majority, or on April 2 if the Democrats force a runoff.

The line of attack is expressed by the front-running Democrat, tall, affable James D. Loebel, 46, mayor of Ojai, former deputy attorney general and official in the Brown administration.

"The umbrella issue is the administration in Washington," he said. "There are two problems. One is the economic . . . and then, of course, the scandal relating to Watergate."

A similar view is heard from candidate Tom Jolicoeur, 52, a white-haired, mod-style Camarillo businessman who is Ventura

County Democratic chairman.

"I think undoubtedly the main issue is Watergate," Jolicoeur said. "Certainly along with that is the inflation and the energy crisis. Those are the main things."

Lagomarsino, attacked as "a vote against impeachment," disagrees about the impact of Watergate.

He comes from a third generation Ventura County family, has been in the State Senate since 1961 and is a popular Republican regular,

Lagomarsino's public position: Let all the Watergate facts come out, get it over and get on to gut issues.

Despite the rhetoric, a poll

by the League of Women Voters showed the eight candidates actually did not rank the Watergate scandal high among issues. The LVW report listed the candidates' issue priorities this way:

- 1—energy; 2—inflation;
- 3—(a tie) — unemployment and tax reform; 4—impeachment; 5 (tie)—election reform and open government; 6 (tie)—pollution and national health.

The 13th Congressional

has 48.1 percent Democratic registration, 45 percent Republican. Lagomarsino's 24th State Senatorial District wholly encompasses the 13th.

Time has been too short for really big campaign spending. Lagomarsino's campaign committee reported spending \$15,236 at mid-February — most of that money raised in behalf of Teague. Loebel, the biggest Democratic spender, reported spending \$11,215 as of Feb. 15.