

Republicans Debate Value of Nixon Visit to Michigan

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WASHINGTON, April 1 — For the first time since the Watergate scandals became a dominant political factor, Republicans are squabbling openly over whether they can afford to be identified with President Nixon.

The scene is Michigan's Eighth Congressional District, which includes Bay City and Saginaw in the state's lower peninsula. Representative James Harvey has been nominated for a Federal judgeship, and a successor will be chosen in a special election April 16.

The Democrats have won three of the last four special elections — in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio, all previously Republican districts—and

national Republican officials want to stop the trend.

This morning, James Sparling, the Republican nominee, who worked briefly last year on Mr. Nixon's legislative staff, told a news conference that he invited the President 10 days ago to come to Michigan to speak in his district.

Mr. Sparling, however, put some space between him and Mr. Nixon.

"I am not asking Mr. Nixon to boost my candidacy," he said. "I am inviting the President to defend himself on Watergate and his economic policies. I thought he ought to get out of the White House and come out and meet the people."

"If he is found guilty of any wrongdoing, then he will get a vote of impeachment from me."

Mr. Sparling, who is opposed by State Representative Robert

Traxler in the House race, said that he had invited Mr. Nixon on his own initiative. George Bush, chairman of the Republican National Committee, took the same position.

"The initial request came to me on March 21 in a telephone call from the candidate," Mr. Bush said in a statement. "The initiative came from Michigan, not Washington."

But Michigan Republican sources said that Mr. Bush and Dean Burch, a White House counselor, had put pressure upon William McLaughlin, the state party chairman, to invite Mr. Nixon. The three met in Chicago over the weekend during a Midwest Republican conference, the sources said.

Mr. McLaughlin was said to have told the White House representatives that a visit from the President would hurt, rather

than help, Mr. Sparling, and to have cited a poll by Robert Teeter of the Market Opinion Research Corporation of Detroit purportedly showing Mr. Sparling running behind because of Watergate.

Mr. McLaughlin, a member of the party's moderate wing, was reportedly stunned earlier this year when the Democrats captured the House seat of Vice President Ford, which had been held by the Republicans since 1910. Mr. Harvey's seat has been Republican for the last 42 years.

Mr. McLaughlin said Watergate "killed us."

Mr. McLaughlin was unavailable for comment tonight, but Robert W. Grant Jr., the Saginaw County Republican chairman, who is co-ordinating Mr. Sparling's campaign, was quoted in Michigan as saying:

in House Race

"Neither Jim's cause nor the party's cause will be served by the President coming in here. I don't want any part of it, none at all."

The Michigan sources interpreted Mr. Bush's and Mr. Burch's mission as an effort by the President's supporters to give him the chance to demonstrate that he was not political "poison." Republican officeholders who must seek re-election this year have been saying for weeks that they feared for their chances if linked to the President.

Mr. Nixon has not yet replied to Mr. Sparling's invitation. At Key Biscayne, Fla., where the President spent the weekend, Gerald L. Warren, the Presidential deputy press secretary, said that Mr. Nixon would "very seriously consider" a Michigan visit.