

Wiggins For Impeachment; Others in G.O.P. Join Him

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 5 — Representative Charles E. Wiggins, President Nixon's strongest defender during the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment proceedings, and many other influential House Republicans announced today that they would vote for impeachment.

Mr. Wiggins, members of the House Republican leadership

Text of Wiggins statement is printed on Page 17.

and one of the leaders of the Southern-conservative block in the House expressed a deep sense of disillusionment after the President conceded this afternoon that he had been an early participant in efforts to conceal the facts of the Watergate burglary.

After a day of hurriedly called caucuses and intense whispering in the corridors of the Capitol, Representative Thomas P. O'Neil Jr. of Massachusetts, the House majority leader, predicted that no more than 75 of the 435 Representatives would vote against impeachment.

Mr. O'Neil's assessment went unchallenged by those who had supported the President until today.

Two other Republicans on the Judiciary Committee who had voted against impeachment—Representative Wiley Mayne of Iowa and Representative Joseph J. Maraziti of New Jersey—also said that they would vote for impeachment on the charge of obstruction of justice.

And most of the others on the committee who had supported Mr. Nixon—including Representatives David W. Dennis of Indiana, Charles W. Sandman, Jr. of New Jersey, Delbert L. Latta of Ohio and Henry P. Smith 3d of upstate New York—said that they were reassessing their position in light of the new evidence.

Leaders of both parties agreed that the President's concession that a House vote for impeachment was a foregone conclusion would make it easier for Republicans and conservative Democrats to vote for impeachment.

In months of closed Judiciary Committee hearings and in the six days of televised debate last month, Mr. Wiggins argued forcefully that no single piece of evidence linked the President directly to a criminal of-

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But today, in a statement outlining his position, Mr. Wiggins declared that "the facts then known to me have now changed."

There was no longer any doubt that the President had agreed to a "plan of action" to obstruct the Watergate investigation, Mr. Wiggins said. He continued:

"These facts standing alone are legally sufficient in my opinion to sustain at least one count against the President of conspiracy to obstruct justice."

Because of this, Mr. Wiggins continued, he reached the "painful conclusion" that it was in the "national interest" for the President to resign.

Two other Republicans on the Judiciary Committee who had voted against impeachment—Representative Wiley Mayne of Iowa and Joseph J. Maraziti of New Jersey—also said that they would vote for impeachment on the charge of obstruction of justice.

And three other Republicans on the committee—Representatives Charles W. Sandman Jr. of New Jersey, Delbert L. Latta of Ohio and Henry P. Smith 3d of upstate New York—said they were reassessing their position after today's statements by Mr. Nixon.

Representative David W. Dennis of Indiana, another Republican member of the Judiciary Committee who also was a staunch defender of the Presi-

dent, said that he would "probably feel the same way" as Mr. Wiggins but added that he wanted to read the new transcripts before making up his mind.

Mr. Latta, who antagonized many of his colleagues with his outspoken partisanship during the Judiciary Committee deliberations, said he had been stunned by the President's statement.

"We certainly weren't given the truth," Mr. Latta said.

Before the White House issued the President's statement, the committee's Republicans met for more than an hour with Mr. Nixon's two principal lawyers, James D. St. Clair and J. Fred Buzhardt Jr.

St. Clair Apology

Mr. Latta said Mr. St. Clair had apologized for having defended the President without access to critical tape recordings.

Representative John J. Rhodes of Arizona, the House minority leader, did not come into his office today. His staff said that he was ill with a sore throat and a fever. But Mr. Rhodes issued the following statement: "The apparent attempt to use the C.I.A. to cover up the depth of the Watergate conspiracy is shocking. The fact that the President's veracity is put in question by this disclosure is a tragedy."

Mr. Rhodes said he would hold a news conference Wednesday, and it was expected that he would announce then how

he planned to vote on impeachment.

Two other members of the House Republican leadership—Representatives John B. Anderson of Illinois, chairman of the House Republican Conference, and Barber B. Conable Jr. of upstate New York, chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee—were even more critical of Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Anderson refused to say that he would vote for impeachment. But, after reading the President's statement, he told reporters:

"This goes to the very heart of the first article of impeachment. The President's own words seem to convict him of that article."

Mr. Conable is widely respected by his Republican colleagues; last year, he supported the President's position on a higher percentage of votes than did any other Republican.

He announced today that he was now prepared to vote for impeachment, and predicted that impeachment would have "overwhelming support in the House."

Representative Joe D. Waggoner of Louisiana, the acknowledged leader of Southern Democrats in the House, said that he wanted to "let the dust settle" before making a final decision in impeachment.

But, speaking of the President's statement, Mr. Waggoner, who had been counted on by the White House to rally support for Mr. Nixon, said that "it certainly does hurt."