Ford Pardon Testimony Set in Historic Room

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President Ford's historic appearance before a congressional subcommittee Thursday will take place in a room that has seen a lot of history this past year.

It is Room 2141 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the meeting room of the House Judiciary Committee.

It was in this room that Mr. Ford appeared nearly a year ago at the first confirmation hearing for a Vice President.

And it was in this room that the Judiciary Committee met for three months for deliberations that led to recommendations that President Nixon be impeached.

It is not a large room. There is space for about 200 chairs, tightly squeezed together after the television cameras have been put in place. Judiciary Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) refused to move to a larger room.

Television will be there to record the event live. The President is scheduled to appear before the subcommittee at 10 a.m. and is expected to spend two or three hours reading a statement and answering questions on the facts that went into his decision to pardon Mr. Nixon for the Watergate. Since he may have committed while President.

A spokesman said the subcommittee, headed by Rep. William L. Hungate (D-Mo.), is trying hard to keep the event just like any other subcommittee. But the fact is it will be the first time in at least a century—and some say the first time ever—that a sitting President has testified before a congressional committee.

The President will sit at a witness table before the two-tiered committee bench and look up at 11 congressmen, two staff members and two television cameras—one directly in front of him and one to the side rear.

Witnesses usually are provided with a pitcher of water and a stack of paper cups. Mr. Ford may get a glass.

Hungate's nine-member subcommittee will be joined by Committee Chairman Rodino and the senior Republican, Edward Hutchenlizn (R-Mich.). The 11 members will be permitted to question the President. Subcommitteee counsel, who usually question, will not.

The President is testifying because Rep. Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.), in her efforts to end the Vietnam war, re-discovered an ancient means of obtaining information called the resolution of inquiry.

A resolution of inquiry directs questions to an official of the executive branch. It is referred to the Committee, which may invite the official to come up and answer the questions. If the committee takes no action, (the House Armed Services Committee did not act on Rep. Abzug's resolutions) the author may after seven days call for a House vote on the resolution. House approval would direct the official to reply.

Rep. Abzug's resolution asking 10 questions of Mr. Ford, and another by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), asking four more, are before Hungate's subcommittee. Mr. Ford offered to appear in person to answer them. He will not be under oath, as members of Congress are not sworn in when they testify at any time during the week.

The text of the resolution submitted by Rep. Abzug consists of 11 other House members:

Resolved, that the President of the United States is hereby requested to furnish the House, within 10 days, with the following information:

1. Did you or your representatives have specific knowledge of any criminal charges pending against Richard M. Nixon prior to issuance of the pardon? If so, what were these charges?

2. Did Alexander Haig refer to or discuss a pardon for Mr. Nixon with Mr. Nixon or his representatives at any time during the week of Aug. 4 or at any subsequent time? If so, what promises were made or conditions set for a pardon, if any? If so, were tapes or transcriptions of any kind made of these conversations or were any notes taken? If so, provide such tapes, transcriptions or notes.

3. When was a pardon for Mr. Nixon first referred to or discussed with Mr. Nixon, or Nixon representatives, by you or your representatives or aides, including the period when you were a member of Congress or Vice President?

4. Who participated in these and subsequent discussions or negotiations with Mr. Nixon or his representatives regarding the possibility of a pardon and at what specific times and locations?

5. Did you ever assist or advise Attorney General William Saxbe or Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski in making the decision to pardon Mr. Nixon and, if so, what facts and legal authorities did they give to you?

6. Did you consult with the vice-presidential nominee, Nelson Rockefeller, before making the decision and, if so, what facts and legal authorities did he give to you?

7. Did you consult with any other attorneys or professors of law before making the decision and, if so, what facts and legal authorities did they give to you?

8. Did you or your representatives ask Mr. Nixon to make a complete statement of criminal guilt, and, if so, what language was suggested to you, your representatives, Mr. Nixon, or his representatives? Was any statement of any kind requested from Mr. Nixon in exchange for the pardon, and, if so, please provide the suggested or requested language?

9. Was a statement issued by Mr. Nixon immediately subsequent to an announcement of the pardon and explained in detail the facts and legal authorities on which the decision was based, including:

2. Any information or facts provided to the President with respect to the mental or physical health of Mr. Nixon.

3. Any information in possession or control of the President with respect to the offenses which were allegedly committed by Mr. Nixon and for which a pardon was granted.

4. Any representations made by or on behalf of the President to Mr. Nixon in connection with the pardon for alleged offenses against the United States.

The President further directed to furnish to the House the full and complete information and facts in his possession or control relating to the pardon which may be granted to any person who is or may be charged or convicted of any offense alleged to be within the jurisdiction of the Office of the United States Special Prosecution Force.