

Senate Approves Meskill for Bench After Long Battle

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WASHINGTON, April 22 —

The Senate approved today the controversial nomination of Thomas J. Meskill, former Governor of Connecticut, as a United States Court of Appeals Judge for the Second Circuit.

The vote was 54 to 36 for the judicial post in the appeals court serving New York, Connecticut and Vermont.

"I am pleased that I have won," Mr. Meskill said in an interview following the vote. "I don't want to get involved in any recriminations."

His statement alluded to an unusual six-month fight for his confirmation that included charges of impropriety, incompetence, and a "lobbying" campaign against him by the American Bar Association, which strongly opposed his nomination.

Mr. Meskill, a former small-town mayor, member of Congress, and supporter of Richard M. Nixon, was nominated for the post by the former President on Aug. 9, 1974, the day Mr.

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Meskill Is Approved by Senate For Bench After 6-Month Fight

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Nixon resigned from the Presidency.

His nomination was reintroduced by President Ford last year and again this year when the 94th Congress convened in January.

"I feel honored," the 47-year-old Mr. Meskill said today. "It is something of a record to be nominated three different times by two different Presidents."

Despite the Presidential support, there was a great deal of criticism of the nomination from the beginning.

At first there were charges that as Governor of Connecticut, Mr. Meskill improperly influenced the awarding of real estate leases, which resulted in financial benefits to business friends. These charges were not substantiated by an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In addition, there was criticism, up to the moment that the vote was taken, that Mr. Meskill did not have enough legal experience to handle the job.

In a list of his 10 most important cases as a lawyer that Mr. Meskill supplied to the Senate Judiciary Committee, none involved more than two days of trial, none was presented to a jury, and none involved any complicated areas of the law, his opponents said. "We should not put a person

on the Second Circuit Court who needs on-the-job training," Senator John V. Tunney, Democrat of California, said during the floor debate.

"When Governor Meskill takes the position on that court, he will not be able to pull his own weight."

Senator Tunney said that he "reluctantly opposed" the nomination but had done so since the Judiciary Committee, of which he is a member, voted 8 to 6 on March 21 to send the nomination to the floor for a vote. The committee had put off the vote twice.

The six dissenting members of the committee, all Democrats, began a campaign against the nomination, which included inserting a dissenting statement in the committee report distributed to all Senators.

The other dissenting committee members are Senators James Abourezk of South Dakota, Birch Bayh of Indiana, Quentin N. Burdick of North Dakota, Philip A. Hart of Michigan and Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts. All except Mr. Kennedy spoke against the nomination today.

The nomination was supported by Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, Democrat of Connecticut.

Only three of the 36 votes against Mr. Meskill were cast by Republicans. Included in this group were Charles H. Percy of Illinois, Richard S. Schweiker of Pennsylvania, and Robert R. Stafford of Vermont.