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Weary jury gets the Gurney case

Associated Press

TAMPA — Prosecutors completed their arguments yesterday and the influence peddling trial of Florida's ex-Sen. Edward J. Gurney and three others was ready to go to the jury after 22 weeks of trial.

U.S. District Judge Ben Krentzman ordered a one-day recess for the weary 12-member jury and said he would instruct the jurors tomorrow.

In 2½ hours of rebuttal, Chief Asst. U.S. Atty. Harvey Schlesinger described the case as "the tragedy of Edward J. Gurney, a man of high character and high reputation."

"He reached the pinnacle of his career. The second most powerful position in the U.S. government — a U.S. senator," he said. "In 1970, a threat came to this man's re-election. The tragedy in this case is when that man resorted to criminal activity to retain this power in a 1974 election."

It was not the law, government, Congress, press or prosecutor that brought Gurney down, Schlesinger said. "He did it to himself."

Defense lawyers claimed the case was a "safari to kill a senator" and attacked the credibility of a key prosecution witness, fund raiser Larry Williams, who testified he collected \$400,000 in illegal campaign contributions for Gurney.

Schlesinger told jurors to cast

aside Williams' 12 days of testimony: "When you go back into the jury room . . . see if we proved the charges against each of these defendants without Larry Williams."

Charged with conspiring to build an illegal slush fund by offering Gurney's influence with the Federal Housing Administration to Florida builders in return for contributions are: Gurney, a 61-year-old Republican best known for his role as former President Nixon's staunchest defender on the Senate Watergate Committee; ex-Gurney aide Joseph Bastien, 33; and former FHA officials K. Wayne Swiger, 61, and Ralph Koontz, 51.

Gurney is also charged with lying to a grand jury, bribery and accepting unlawful compensation in the form of a free condominium.

The seven criminal charges carry a maximum penalty of 42 years in jail and about \$80,000 in fines.

All the defendants testified during the long trial, and all denied the charges.

Their lawyers insisted the government case hinged on the testimony of liars, cheats, con men, lawbreakers and people who made deals for their testimony.

"To convict these men you must believe Larry Williams," one attorney said.

Williams testified that he col-



EDWARD GURNEY

A possible 42 years in jail

lected nearly \$400,000 in Gurney's name between 1971-73 by shaking down builders and wielding pressure for approval of their projects at the three FHA offices in Florida.