

# Grand jury counsel was Watergate hawk

by Andy Ryan

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JUNEAU -- He was considered a hawk back in 1974, when he served as a member of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force that helped bring about the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon.

After Nixon resigned, George Frampton was among those who urged that the former president be brought to trial on charges of obstructing justice.

Watergate special prosecutor Leon Jaworski called Frampton "a brilliant young lawyer with an analytical mind and the ability to write clearly"—and gave him the task of writing a special report to Congress on the findings of the Watergate grand jury.

Today, at 40, Frampton is one of two prosecutors who guided a Juneau grand jury on its way to a report that calls for a legislature to begin impeachment proceedings against Gov. Bill Sheffield.

Frampton, now in private law practice in Washington, D.C., was hired in May by Attorney General Norman Gorsuch, to work with state Chief Prosecutor Dan Hickey on the grand jury investigation of a \$9.1 million state office building lease in Fairbanks.

"I don't think, without the grand jury's compulsory process and power to take testimony under oath, coupled with the

diligent efforts by Mr. Hickey's team, that many of these facts would have come out," Frampton said of the Juneau grand jury's report.

"I think the grand jury acted responsibly; I think they acted with restraint. And there's nothing in the report with which I disagree."

There are remarkable similarities between Frampton's work with the Watergate grand jury and the Juneau panel investigating the Fairbanks office building lease. Both grand juries investigated sitting state executives, and both took the highly unusual action of issuing reports to legislative bodies.

The Watergate grand jury, Frampton said, through its subpoena powers had received tape recordings of Nixon's conversations, which Congress had been unable to obtain.

"The grand jury wanted the House (Judiciary Committee) to have that evidence—which showed clearly that President Nixon had been involved in the same criminal conduct charged in the indictments against his aides," Frampton said.

Frampton said the issuance of a report in connection with an impeachment proceeding in the federal system was unprecedented at the time. He doesn't know if the Juneau grand jury report is unique.

"I don't know whether this has been done before in other states

in terms of a specific recommendation of impeachment, but there's certainly a great deal of precedent of a grand jury making public report."

Characterizing himself as a hawk when it came to seeking indictments against Nixon, after he resigned as president, Frampton says he still thinks Nixon should have been indicted for his part in Watergate.

In a 1974 memo to Jaworski, urging that Nixon be prosecuted, Frampton predicted, with remarkable foresight what might happen if charges were not filed against the former president. The memo is reproduced in Jaworski's book on his Watergate experiences, "The Right and the Power."

"The Powerful men around him have also lost their jobs and been disgraced," Frampton wrote of Nixon, "but many of them will have also lost their liberty and livelihood."

"Mr. Nixon, on the other hand, will continue to be supported in lavish style with a pension and subsidies at taxpayers' expense until his death."

"The prospect of Mr. Nixon publishing his memoirs (and thereby adding several million dollars to his net worth) should remind us that unlike his aides who are convicted of crimes, Mr. Nixon will have the 'last say' about his own role in Watergate if he is not prosecuted," Frampton wrote.