

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — With party rules and platform planks as the issues, Gerald R. Ford and Ronald Reagan are heading into the first critical test of their delegate strength at the 1976 Republican National Convention

Reagan and his strategists chose the issues on which the key votes would be taken tonight, but as the time for balloting drew near Ford's delegate total in the contest for the presidential nomination moved to within three votes of the 1,130 needed for victory

THE LATEST Associated Press survey, based on legal commitments and publicly stated preferences, gave Ford 1,127, Reagan 1,036, with 96 uncommitted

For weeks the Ford camp has claimed the President had 1,135 votes, while Reagan's managers have said the former California governor was certain of 1,140 votes on the first ballot for the presidential nomination.

But those claims were viewed largely as part of the intense political, psychological warfare the two men aimed at each other and at the uncommitted delegates who hold the key to the aspirations of both men.

The roll call votes tonight, occurring just 24 hours before the presidential balloting, will be taken as a clear sign of which man will leave Kansas City as the Republican nominee for president.

A decisive victory for either man could cripple the other's chance for the nomination

THE REAGAN forces are geared for a floor fight tonight on their proposal to require that each presidential candidate name his proposed running mate before the balloting on the presidential nomination

Reagan backers call it the 'right to know' rule. The Ford camp describes it as Reagan's attempt to force the President to endure an uproar similar to that which Reagan encountered when he named Sen. Richard S. Schweiker as his choice for the vice presidential nomination. \*~ ~\*~

Ford's backers called the Reagan proposal the ''misery loves company" rule.

The other major fight planned by the Reagan camp involves the foreign policy plank in the Republican platform which will be presented to the convention for approval

ENTITLED "Morality in Foreign Policy.' the Reagan amendment to the platform would insert a statement implicitly critical of the policy of detente with the Soviet Union pursued by Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.

The Reagan statement would put the Republican party on record as supporting many of the criticisms of Ford foreign policy that the former California governor used as campaign

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Nonetheless, some Ford advisers were recommending that the President accept the amendment and avoid a divisive floor fight. according to sources close to the campaign.

But Sen. Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, Ford's convention floor manager, said a final decision on how to deal with the proposal probably

wouldn't be made until Ford strategists could assess the vote on the rules, scheduled to come up before the platform committee report.

ANOTHER platform fight is likely to  
ecelebrated on the abortion issue. But that  
does not involve a test between Ford  
and Reagan supporters.