

Nixon to Dramatize Leadership

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President Nixon's State of the Union message, which he is planning to deliver to Congress in person about Jan. 23, will represent a major attempt to dramatize his leadership in foreign and domestic affairs.

Officials said yesterday that the President is working on the message in the seclusion of his San Clemente home in full realization that it affords an opportunity to focus attention on issues unrelated to

Watergate and charges of scandal.

Some aides predicted that the message, which will be delivered before a joint session of Congress late this month, may contain important surprises, but there was no indication what they may be.

One surprise could come in the field of energy, which is expected to occupy the President and Congress for much of the year and beyond.

Otherwise, the principal new emphasis in the domestic

area will be on the President's plan for national health insurance.

It will be a revision of the proposal he first made in 1971 to provide coverage for all Americans without a tax increase.

Financing would be through employee-employer payments to insurance companies to buy policies tailored to meet minimum standards the government would establish.

Democrats led by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massa-

chusetts will attack the Nixon administration plan and urge instead a national health program financed by the government and guaranteeing minimum coverage for all persons.

In addition to energy and health insurance, the President's message is expected to focus in the domestic field on an urban transportation revenue-sharing plan, which would provide funds to states and cities to develop their own public transportation systems. The President is not ex-

in State of Union Address

pected to propose a new welfare program. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is continuing to work on a welfare reform program but it is not yet ready for the President to incorporate in his new legislative program.

Another section of the message is expected to discuss the impact of the energy shortage on environmental programs, and new proposals are expected on rural development revenue-sharing programs.

Last year, the President sent a long State of the Union message to Congress by messenger instead of delivering it in person.

The chief reason, one aide said, was that he had delivered his inaugural address on Jan. 20 and did not want to re-

turn to the Capitol a few days later with a State of the Union address and be accused of trying to focus too much attention on himself.

The failure to deliver the message in person, however, was widely criticized, and White House advisers are unanimous in urging the President to go in person with his message this year.

Raymond K. Price, the President's chief speech writer since he entered office, is in San Clemente helping with the drafting of the address.

Before the President went to California the White House organized a series of meetings between Republican congressional leaders and White House aides to discuss proposals for the address. Vice Presi-

dent Ford attended most of the meetings but Mr. Nixon did not.

The customary reports from various federal agencies on proposals for the State of the Union and special studies from the Domestic Council also have been sent to the President.

With so many unenacted presidential proposals still before Congress, much of the emphasis in the message is expected to be on pending proposals in the fields of elementary and secondary education aid, better communities programs, drug trafficking, consumer protection and election reform.

However, with the House Judiciary Committee considering a bill of impeachment,

Nixon supporters believe he must not only focus on non-Watergate issues but direct the attention of Congress and the public to new programs.

These aides believe that the voters are more concerned about energy and cost-of-living problems than Watergate, and Melvin R. Laird, counselor to the President, said yesterday that preliminary reports from congressmen who have sampled voter opinion support that belief.

Laird said he had talked with 30 or 40 congressmen and they have not reported any great push for impeachment.

On the contrary, Laird said, they have found that their constituents are deeply concerned about the energy shortage and related issues.