

Nixon Reaffirms Backing for Gray

Washington

The White House reaffirmed its support for L. Patrick Gray as FBI director yesterday as indications mounted that Gray's chances of Senate confirmation are ebbing.

At Key Biscayne, Fla. deputy presidential press secretary Gerald L. Warren said President Nixon has "no intention" of withdrawing Gray's nomination, as some Republican senators and a handful of White House aides think he should.

"The President has submitted Mr. Gray's nomination," said Warren. "The President supports that nomination."

Warren refrained, however, from any new praise for

Gray and stated the announcement in language bereft of enthusiasm, asked whether the President's backing was as strong as ever. He said only that he was "not changing" past declarations of support.

The spokesman's comments appeared to confirm — at least in the view of several sponsors of both parties — the impression that the White House has lost its enthusiasm for Gray but has not yet decided how to deal with the problem.

"They're desperate to keep the Watergate off the floor," said one Republican. "Gray is hopelessly enmeshed with the Watergate, which means they have to find someone who isn't."