

Ervin, Joseph Wilson ^[1]

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by Sam J. Ervin, Jr., 1986

3 Mar. 1901–25 Dec. 1945

Joseph Wilson Ervin, congressman, was born in Morganton of Scotch-Irish, English,[Welsh](#) ^[2], and French [Huguenot](#) ^[3] ancestry. His father, [Samuel James Ervin](#) ^[4], practiced law in Morganton and the surrounding area for sixty-five years; his mother was Laura Theresa Powe. Ervin received his early education in private and public schools at Morganton. After graduating from the Morganton High School in 1916, he entered [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5] where he joined the Dialectic Literary Society and the Alpha Tau Omega social fraternity, participated actively in campus politics, and served as managing editor of the *[Yackety Yack](#)* ^[6], the annual student publication. Having lost a year's study through illness, he was awarded his A.B. degree by the university in 1921; he then entered its law school, where he was a student from 1921 to 1923 and became a member of Phi Delta Phi legal fraternity. He was admitted to the [North Carolina bar](#) ^[7] in August 1922. Upon leaving the university he practiced law in Gastonia until the spring of 1925, when he moved to [Charlotte](#) ^[8] where he made his home the rest of his life.

Active in Democratic party affairs, Ervin served briefly as prosecuting attorney in Charlotte City Court and formed a partnership for the general practice of law with another [Burke County](#) ^[9] native, Guy Thomas Carswell. Carswell's talents as a trial lawyer and Ervin's thorough legal scholarship soon made Carswell and Ervin a well known and successful law firm in [Mecklenburg County](#) ^[10]. Ervin held memberships in the Lions Club, the Knights of Pythias, the [Masonic](#) ^[11] order, the [Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of North Carolina](#) ^[12], and the Myers Park Presbyterian Church.

Ervin won the [Democratic](#) ^[13] nomination for Congress over two other contestants in the primary of 27 May 1944, then defeated his Republican opponent by a vote of 50,605 to 26,757 in the general election in November 1944. He represented the Tenth Congressional District in the Seventy-ninth Congress from 3 Jan. 1945 until his death at the end of the year. As a member of the House, he advocated the admission of Alaska to statehood, the conservation of the nation's natural resources, and the establishment of a national academy to train Americans for diplomatic service; he opposed legislation designed to confer upon the federal government control of the hiring practices of private employers. He died in Washington, D.C., and was buried in Forest Hills Cemetery, Morganton.

On 10 Sept. 1930, at Richmond, Va., Ervin married Susan Graham Erwin, daughter of Joseph Ernest Erwin and his wife, Susan Clark, of Morganton, and grand-daughter of Chief Justice [Walter Clark](#) ^[14] of the [North Carolina Supreme Court](#) ^[15]. She survived him and contracted a second marriage with W. Harold Williamson.

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Additional Resources:

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