

WXPst JAN 6 1974

Ervin Says He Could Retain Seat

MORGANTON, N.C., Jan. 5 (UPI) — Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. said today he believes he's "stronger politically at this moment" than ever before in his career.

Ervin, reacting to a suggestion by Sen. Edward Gurney (R-Fla.) that the North Carolina Democrat is retiring from office because the Watergate hearings had plunged him into political trouble at home, declared Gurney "knows nothing about North Carolina politics."

Ervin, 77, announced recently he was not seeking re-election because of his age.

But Ervin, resting at his home in the North Carolina mountains, declared today: "I have no doubt that I could win the Democratic nomination and be elected over any opposing candidate in the general election. That's my honest belief."

Gurney, at a Dallas news conference, said Ervin's explanation of age as a reason for retiring "just isn't factual."