

Turlington, Zebulon Vance ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1996

8 Jan. 1877–16 Nov. 1969

See also: [Turlington Act](#) ^[2]

Zebulon Vance Turlington, lawyer, was born in [Johnston County](#) ^[3], the son of Eli and Sarah Woodall Turlington. After attending Turlington Institute, a noted school operated by his brother in Smithfield, he taught for two years at nearby Benson and for one five-month term in [Ashe County](#) ^[4]. He studied law at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5] (1898–99) and opened an office to practice law in Mooresville, [Iredell County](#) ^[6], on 21 Aug. 1900. Turlington served as clerk and treasurer of the town in 1900–1901, and from 1900 for sixty years he also was the town attorney. For ten years he was the county attorney. His political initiation occurred when he began many years of service on the county [Democratic](#) ^[7] committee. He represented [Iredell County](#) ^[6] in the [General Assembly](#) ^[8] terms of 1905, 1905–8, 1909, 1911, 1923, 1925, 1927, and 1939.

In the legislature Turlington was chairman of the house committee on appropriations in 1911. In 1923 he was the author of a prohibition bill widely referred to as the [Turlington Act](#) ^[2], the bill that made North Carolina [legally dry](#) ^[9]; it remained in effect until 1967. At the next session he was chairman of the committee on roads at a time when the state was engaged in a significant road-building program.

An active [Presbyterian](#) ^[10], he was a Sunday School superintendent for nineteen years, an elder in his church, and president of the Board of Regents of Barium Springs Presbyterian Orphanage. In 1902 he married Mary Howard Rankin, and they had two daughters, Mary Howard and Sarah Woodall. An infant daughter died in 1903 and a son in 1911. Turlington's funeral was held in the First Presbyterian Church, Mooresville, where he was buried in Willow Valley Cemetery.

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