

The courts assuredly will not allow the next General Assembly to be elected on an unconstitutional basis. Nor do I believe they will permit "at-large" elections, involving thousands of candidates and necessitating the use of paper ballots of enormous size. Such an election would make a mockery of the elective process. The transfer of this legislative responsibility to the courts would be an injustice to the people of Maryland. The people of the State have chosen you as their lawmakers, imposing upon you the responsibility of making legislative decisions and reposing in you their confidence and trust that you are equal to any legislative task no matter how great. You have not broken faith with them in the past; I know that you will not break faith with them now. Let there be no mistake about the need for reapportionment legislation now. The primary elections of 1966 are just eleven months away. It is true, of course, that the General Assembly will convene in regular session next January. But we all are aware of the many complicated problems that will face us at this time. To attempt to deal with reapportionment then not only would lessen the chances of successful reapportionment but would also seriously hamper your efforts to deal with the regular business of state government.

It is for this reason that I have convened you in Extraordinary Session at this time. If we are ever to agree on a plan of reapportionment, now is the time to do it. Let me say emphatically that I am aware that it is your prerogative — and yours alone — to decide on the plan of reapportionment, subject only to constitutional requirements. As the Chief Executive of this state, I would not presume to infringe upon your authority by urging upon you any particular reapportionment plan. Your Legislative Council has endorsed a plan which the Attorney General believes will meet the court tests. The Attorney General further advises me that other plans he has reviewed likewise meet the constitutional requirements. I would hope that at this Extraordinary Session you will not only resolve the reapportionment problems for the 1966 elections but also adopt a Constitutional Amendment to provide a formula for automatic reapportionment in future years as the population of our State both increases and shifts.

I am fully aware of the magnitude of the problems you face here. I know that a great sacrifice will be required of you. But I do not doubt for a moment that you will exercise the statesmanship that is expected of you, regardless of the personal sacrifice you may be called upon to make. It is my hope that the important business of reapportionment may be dealt with promptly and expeditiously. All of us,