

under the constitution for their operation and for how well they genuinely serve the people of this State. That has been a warm and satisfying experience for me. It has also given me a rare opportunity to come to know the strength and weaknesses, the possibilities for improvement and limitations of the highly diverse structure that makes up the executive arm of our government. I have been profoundly grateful for the personal dedication and competence of those who have served in it with me. I have become deeply imbued with the animating principles and traditions built into that government by those who established it and have led it over the years. But I have also come to believe that consistent with those traditions and principles, there is much that can and should be strengthened among the administrative agencies to meet the needs and challenges facing Maryland during the remaining third of this century. By starting this endeavor now, yet holding its completion until my successor has had an opportunity to consider the study, the best of both experience and the fresh outlook of a new administration can be brought to bear to strengthen the machinery of government. In addition, if the work is objectively done and approved by the next chief executive, the likelihood of getting tangible action is greatly enhanced by having it ready for consideration in the early stages of the new administration.

Based on those considerations, and after a long and careful look ahead, I want to consider with you several major areas in which I believe the organization and operation of the executive branch can be significantly improved. The first and most fundamental need is for a comprehensive and, yes, historic study leading to the modernization and streamlining of the State's administrative organization. Over the years several major special task forces have appraised the administrative arm of our government and made important contributions to it. One of the most thoughtful was that initiated by Governor Albert Ritchie in the early 1920s. Similar studies were carried out in the 1930s at the direction of Governors Harry Nice and Herbert O'Connor. The most recent comprehensive outside appraisal was made in the early 1950s at the request of then Governor Theodore McKeldin by the Sobeloff-Stockbridge Commission on the Administrative Organization of the State. I believe that sufficient time has now elapsed since the last such study for an outside inquiry again to be initiated. Continuity and stability are important to the proper functioning of government. But there is also need for a periodic, independent appraisal of an administrative apparatus, just as there is value in regular medical check-ups for individuals.