

Its relevance has persevered because its authors recognized that, while institutions will change, great principles will endure. Therefore, they confined their efforts to an expression of great principles, confident that the righteousness of these principles would suffice to provide security and direction for all future generations.

What were and are these great principles? First, to secure and sustain the sovereignty of the people. Second, to protect and perpetuate the rights of the individual. Third, to create a political structure which safeguards the citizen by a series of checks and balances among — but not within — our three traditional branches of government. Fourth, to develop that superstructure for government most conducive to efficient administration, effective legislation and impartial adjudication.

Finally and above all, a philosophy prevailed which recognized the constitutional imperative that omission produces as significant an impact as inclusion. It was the restraint of our founding fathers that has permitted the U.S. Constitution to endure. By avoiding detail, they assured flexibility and by eliminating all unnecessary specifics, they preserved the essence.

In contrast to the spirit of the U.S. Constitution, where political passions were surrendered to logic and compromise, stand the constitutions of many of our states. I have no doubt that those who framed the constitutions of our states sought — like those immortalized federalists who wrote the fundamental law of our nation — to rise above the parochial and write true to principle. Yet they rose too little and wrote too much. Consequently, our state constitutions were cluttered with detail that was destined to obstruct rather than to guide inevitable institutional evolution.

Yet we must not be too harsh with our states' constitutional forebears for they could not foresee the phenomenal socio-economic changes of the future. Maryland's century-old Constitution epitomizes this failure to envision the future, a failure caused by historical circumstances at the time it was framed. In 1867 Maryland had not yet recovered from the agonizing impact of the Civil War — the wounds of conflict ran deep — and the memories of martial law and political abuses were still vivid. At that time Maryland was a rural, complacent state with barely a half million residents, who sought little from their State government but to restore the *peace* and to permit them to recover *in peace* from the exhausting war.

It is not surprising that Maryland's 1867 Constitution was unable to surmount the transition between the ages of the clipper ship and