

1952

The exciting campaign of 1948 failed to produce constructive activity in Washington. Republicans in Congress joined with southern representatives to block civil rights legislation in exchange for support of the Taft-Hartley Act and other pro-business laws. The communist victory in China and the North Korean invasion in June 1950 turned foreign policy from a cold front in Europe to a hot spot in the Far East. Having to govern through another war effort and public disagreement with the military proved to be heavy burdens for Truman and the Democrats. As if world unrest and domestic economic difficulties were not enough, the Truman administration had to deal with allegations of corruption and the anti-communist witch hunts of Wisconsin Senator Joseph R. McCarthy.³²

The 1950 elections were a harbinger of events to come. The Republicans came close to control of the Senate and sharply reduced the Democratic margin in the House. Several important Democratic Senate leaders fell victim to this Republican insurgence including Maryland's Millard Tydings, who had served since 1928 and held several important committee assignments. Senator Tydings lost to a relatively unknown Baltimore Republican, John Marshall Butler, with the attacks of Senator McCarthy on his senior colleague viewed as contributing to the Tydings defeat.³³ Maryland Democrats became an extremely fractured party in 1950 with a bitter gubernatorial primary fight between Governor Lane and the popular George P. Mahoney³⁴ the lending cause. Mr. Mahoney had received the highest number of votes in the May 5th primary but under an archaic unit rule system,³⁵ the Democratic nomination at the state party convention went to the incumbent Governor Lane who had polled 17,582 fewer votes. This Democratic discord allowed Theodore R. McKeldin to win the governor's race in November by the largest majority for a Republican in Maryland's history and to become the only Republican Governor south of the Mason-Dixon line.³⁶ Democratic infighting continued to be bitter in the 1952 senatorial primary which Mahoney did win over establishment favorite Congressman Lansdale G. Sasser.

President Truman's foreign and domestic difficulties had not subsided by the time of the 1952 presidential contests and the independent Missourian announced in April that he would not run for re-election. A number of Democrat Senators and Governors were quickly touted as potential successors. Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee entered the race early, beating the President in the New Hampshire primary on March 11, 1952. Kefauver continued to poll well in the primaries winning 10 other states and collecting 64.3 percent of all primary votes while no one else exceeded 10 percent. In the Maryland primary on May 5, 1952 Kefauver defeated the unpledged delegate choice by 137,885 to 46,361. However, the Tennessee Senator was not the choice of party leaders and his first ballot vote total of 340 was well short of the 616 majority needed for nomination. Three other candidates had gained considerable support by the convention. Senator Russell of Georgia had 268 first ballot votes mostly from southern delegations; Governor W. Averell Harriman of New York had 123 1/2 votes including a substantial block of 83 1/2 from his own state; and Governor Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois had a solid 273 votes from the northeast and midwest. A reluctant candidate, Stevenson was the beneficiary of the