

## **CHAPTER VIII**

# **CONTEMPORARY MARYLAND IN NATIONAL POLITICS**

### **The Elections of 1960 to 1980**

Political assassinations, the Civil Rights Movement, reapportionment, Vietnam, Watergate, oil crises, inflation, recessions, third party candidacies and various other events brought the American public a rapid succession of difficult problems in which to judge the presidential political contests of 1960 to 1980. The media and money have hallmarked this most recent generation of presidential elections in which the American public has been the most surveyed, most researched, most analyzed and most sought after electorate in history.<sup>1</sup>

Money has always been an ingredient in the pursuit of political power whether as a legitimate campaign expense or as an inducement to decision-making. However, the magnitude of the role of finances in political campaigns has made several quantum leaps in the last 20 years of presidential elections. Total campaign expenditures reached 900 million dollars in 1980, four and one-half times the sum spent in 1964. Contributions from special interest groups have risen even more dramatically in a shorter time span, 8.5 million dollars in 1972 to 55.2 million in 1980.<sup>2</sup>

The rise of importance of the media and money in the presidential sweepstakes has been accompanied by a corresponding weakening in the electorate with party affiliation.<sup>3</sup> With reports of presidential campaigns being broadcast every hour on radio, candidate images being shown daily on America's televisions, and political issues being continually critiqued by journalists, the voting public has unprecedented direct access to the candidate, issues and campaign. Such immediate involvement and instant analysis have separated party apparatus and grassroots leaders from presidential campaigns. Issues selected, reported, edited and reviewed in the media have made the precinct or district worker unnecessary to carry the message of the party's candidate. With the presidential nominating process, as well as general election campaign activity, significantly altered by the modern use of media and money, it is not surprising that partisan identification has become a less significant factor in voter behavior on a presidential level. Voting blocs may now be influenced as much by the campaign efforts of single issue organizations as party identification in certain elections.<sup>4</sup>

In this contemporary era of media and money, the Democratic and Republican parties have each captured the White House three times. The Democrats earned victories in 1960, 1964 and 1976 while the Republicans won in 1968, 1972 and 1980. After giving its popular vote to the presidential winner in 17 of the previous 18 elections,<sup>5</sup> the State of Maryland deviated from the national result twice in the six contests of this period. In 1968 and 1980, the state's electoral votes went to the losing candidate with the greatest variation from the nation's popular vote (6.5 percent) occurring in the most recent election. Maryland has