

“Democrats,” “Republicans” or “Jacobins.”⁸ From 1789 to 1796 the Federalists controlled the presidential election process but in the six elections from 1800 through 1820, the Democratic-Republicans captured the Presidency with three Virginians, who were all former Secretaries of State, serving two terms each.⁹ By 1820 the Federalists were virtually extinct as a party and a new political alignment would soon arise.

1789

The first presidential election in Maryland was the final vote in a series of election contests focusing on the new Federal Constitution. On September 17, 1787 the Constitution of the United States was signed by its drafters and forwarded to Congress with the recommendation that a convention of delegates in each state meet to ratify the document before it would become effective. Published in various Maryland newspapers shortly after it was signed, the question of the new Constitution became an issue in the election for the Maryland General Assembly in October 1787. Those persons evidencing support for the new Constitution were generally successful in this election and when the Maryland General Assembly convened in November 1787, the issue of ratification was promptly addressed. After hearing from Maryland's delegates to the Constitutional Convention,¹⁰ the General Assembly passed a resolution calling for an election on the first Monday in April 1788 to choose delegates to a convention to be held in Annapolis on April 21, 1788 to consider the new organization of government.

The election for delegates to the state ratifying convention generated considerable public debate for the next four months. Those in favor of ratification were labeled “Federalists” while those opposed to the new Constitution (outright or with amendments) were titled “Anti-Federalists.” This political division, while not yet rising to the level of party politics, reflected to a large degree the existing political divisions of that time.¹¹ Perhaps the most dominant Anti-Federalist was Samuel Chase who for years had been championing the cause of paper money in Maryland and relief for the Revolutionary War debtors.¹² The Federalists were led by many respected Maryland political figures such as Charles Carroll, Alexander Contee Hanson and Thomas Johnson.¹³ This was a spirited election with the Federalists dominating in all areas of the state except Baltimore, Anne Arundel and Harford Counties where the influence and leadership of Samuel Chase produced some surprising victories for Anti-Federalist delegates. The sending of 64 Federalist delegates out of 76 total delegates to the state ratifying convention undoubtedly insured ultimate ratification but the opposition did not allow the convention to proceed without debate, uncertainty and drama. The new United States Constitution was approved on April 28, 1788 by an overwhelming vote of 63 to 11, and an effort to attach amendments or conditions failed.¹⁴

The next electoral battleground was the October 1788 elections to the Maryland General Assembly. It would be the newly elected state legislature which would determine how Maryland would choose its presidential electors and the first members to the House of Representatives of the new United States Congress. Again, the Federalists were successful with Anti-Federalist candidates for the House of Delegates gaining victories only in Baltimore, Anne Arundel and Harford Counties. In the City of Baltimore, Samuel Chase himself lost his re-election bid to the House of Delegates. With firm control of the