

stress, the Nixon re-election campaign was well-heeled, organized and administered. McGovern carried only the electoral votes of Massachusetts and the District of Columbia as Nixon swept to an unprecedented Republican landslide. The results in Maryland mirrored the country as Nixon carried every county and lost Baltimore City by 8.35 percent (119,486 to 141,323), the smallest Democratic margin during the 1960-1980 era of presidential elections in the state's most populous subdivision.

1976

Much had happened since the presidential election of 1972. Watergate brought an ignoble end to the Nixon years with the first resignation of a United States President occurring on August 9, 1974. President Nixon was himself able to name his successor as Vice President Agnew was forced to resign on October 10, 1973 as a result of investigations into kickback schemes and influence peddling in Maryland by the U.S. District Attorney's Office.³⁹ American involvement in the Vietnam War officially terminated on March 29, 1973 with the feared North Vietnamese takeover being completed two years later on April 29, 1975. The country's economy was struggling with cycles of inflation and recession of increasing magnitude. Our vulnerability from an oil based energy system was exposed in the shortage or embargo of 1973. In summary, it had been a tumultuous four years in Washington and the country prior to the 1976 race for the Presidency.

The amiable Gerald Ford, who had risen to the nation's highest office by the most indirect route ever taken, had pardoned former President Nixon which added to his difficulties in defending a discredited administration. He was challenged in the Republican primaries and state conventions by the former Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, who was championing the conservative cause within the party. In Maryland, President Ford won the preferential primary on May 18, 1976 by a comfortable margin of 16 percent (96,291 to 69,680) and received 18 out of 24 congressional district level delegate positions. The President gained the Republican nomination but with the closest convention voting in 24 years⁴⁰ and the narrowest for an incumbent President in the twentieth century.

The Republican difficulties were a boom to the Democrats and undoubtedly contributed to the entrance of numerous presidential hopefuls who entered the delegate selection game in state caucuses, conventions and primaries.⁴¹ The former Governor of Georgia, Jimmy Carter, had been running for the Presidency longer than most observers had realized and seized an early lead in the delegate race. By the time of Maryland's primary, the former Naval Academy graduate and Georgia Governor had a commanding lead. National attention focused on the state as a stop-Carter movement was forming. A willing participant in this effort was Governor Mandel whose disagreements with Carter originated from their battles in the Governor's Council.⁴² Although the Mandel backed candidacy of California Jerry Brown achieved a plurality victory over Carter in Maryland's primary, it was a hollow victory. Entering the race late, the Brown candidacy failed to file slates of delegate candidates and Carter captured 25 out of the 40 congressional district level delegates who were elected on the same day as the presidential beauty contest.