

election votes but it was not enough to defeat an incumbent President facing an international crisis. Carter won 24 of the record 34 contested Democratic presidential primaries and this showing, coupled with the party's proportional representation rules for delegate selection, assured the President renomination for a second term.⁴⁸ In Maryland, Carter defeated Kennedy 226,528 to 181,091 in the May 13, 1980 primary gathering 22 of the state's 42 congressional district level national convention delegates.

The Republicans made modest gains in the off year congressional elections of 1978 winning three additional Senate and 13 House of Representatives seats. These successes and widespread dissatisfaction with the Democratic administration encouraged Republican presidential hopefuls as the primary or convention campaign commenced in early 1980. The frontrunner was former California Governor Ronald Reagan who had come within 117 delegate votes of unseating President Ford at the 1976 Republican National Convention. Reagan had been courting traditional Republican voters with a party unity theme while broadening his base with conservative and working class groups in the country since he had left the California statehouse in 1974 and which intensified after his narrow primary loss in 1976. In a well managed, financed and timed nominating campaign, Reagan thwarted the challenges of Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker, Illinois Congressmen John Anderson and Philip Crane and Texans, John B. Connally and George Bush.⁴⁹ Former President Ford was often mentioned as a stop-Reagan candidate but that possibility did not materialize. By the time of Maryland's primary, the Republican nomination was within the grasp of Reagan. The Maryland vote was the closest of the last 16 primaries as Reagan captured a plurality of 48.2 percent, defeating George Bush 80,557 to 68,389. Congressman Anderson polled almost 10 percent of the vote or 16,244 votes. In the important delegate contests, Maryland Republicans sent 18 persons favoring Reagan and 12 preferring Bush to Detroit.⁵⁰ With the nomination assured by the July beginning of the national convention the Vice Presidential position attracted the spotlight. Seeking the traditional balance on a national ticket Reagan selected the Ivy League educated, New England born and Texas resident, George Bush, who had acknowledged the inevitable on May 26, 1980 by conceding to Reagan prior to the final primary elections. The Republicans left their convention generally unified and confident although Congressman John Anderson had launched an independent race for president hoping to attract the support of moderate Republicans.⁵¹

The general election campaign did not accurately foreshadow the sweeping Republican victory as various polls consistently showed the contestants within striking distance of each other. Both of the candidates evoked a high percentage of unfavorable reaction from the electorate which kept either from gaining a significant advantage. As in 1960, perhaps the most important campaign event was the televised debate between Reagan and Carter held just eight days prior to the November 4th general election. Drawing upon his considerable media skills, the Republican candidate won the television viewers, post-debate ratings and subsequent election over the Democratic incumbent who was put on the defensive by the challenger's style as well as by the troubled domestic economy and international affairs.⁵² Reagan carried all but five states and the District of Columbia in amassing an electoral vote landslide of 489 to 49. The Republican nominee had a slim majority of 50.7 percent of the popular vote as the Independent candidacy of