

In Maryland, the 1824-1852 era may be properly viewed as modernizing Maryland government and politics. The Adams/Jackson contests did serve to heighten awareness about the presidential selection process and quicken the pace of change. Resolutions were adopted in the Maryland General Assembly for a uniform method of election of presidential electors in the country—first by the district method utilized by Maryland⁷ and then by the general ticket method.⁸ The Jackson-Democrats, led by Roger Brooke Taney, were also instrumental in changing the method of nominating candidates for state and local offices by convening the first statewide party convention on May 21, 1827. This prompted the formation of a state central committee and a permanent party organization to monitor, solicit and promote party affairs.

The strengthening of party politics in Maryland coupled with the growing sentiment for greater public participation in government aided in the enactment of two significant reform actions between 1836 and 1852. In September 1836 a state constitutional crisis evolved from the election for representatives to the state senatorial electoral college. The Democrats or "Van Buren" electors won 19 positions and the Whigs 21. However, the Van Buren electors refused to meet and select the State Senators unless assurance was received that some Democrats would receive seats in the State Senate. The constitution required a quorum of 24 and the 21 Whig electors could not conduct business alone. The Democrats argued their entitlement to fair representation because their 19 electors represented 205,922 people while the 21 Whig electors represented a smaller population of 138,002. The constitutional impasse had an immediate adverse impact on the Democrats strength in the elections for House of Delegates in October 1836 and for presidential electors in November 1836 and the quorum deadlock was broken.⁹ However, the 1837 legislature passed a Reform Act¹⁰ which gave to Maryland citizens the right to vote directly for Governor and State Senators while also providing for reapportionment of the House of Delegates.¹¹

Reform was also in the wind by the end of the next decade as the issue of underrepresentation was not quieted by the 1838 compromises. In addition, the state had endured a period of heavy taxation to pay for accumulated state debt which made the public ready for some changes. The result was a call for a constitutional convention, the election of convention delegates and a submitting of a new constitution to Maryland voters on June 4, 1851. The new constitution passed and greatly expanded the public's involvement in state and local government. Changes were made in the state legislature and the Governor's term was increased from three to four years. But more significantly the following offices became elective under the Constitution of 1851—Comptroller, four Commissioners of Public Works, Commissioner of Land Office, circuit court and appeals judges, clerks of courts, Registers of Wills, State's Attorneys, County Commissioners, Surveyors, Justices of Peace, Constables and Road Supervisors. This popularization of local government solidified party politics in Maryland by insuring a close relationship between the voting public and its leaders.

The Jackson legacy of popularizing government was realized to a significantly greater extent than his personal influence on policy and political parties in Maryland. After his modest popular and electoral vote margins in 1824, neither Jackson nor any of the Democratic candidates who followed him would carry Maryland until 1852. Jackson's