

1856 ELECTION SUMMARY

Candidate (Party)	Popular Vote		Electoral Vote	
	Md.	U.S.	Md.	U.S.
James Buchanan (D)	39,115	1,836,072		174
Millard Fillmore (AKN)	47,462	873,053	8	8
John C. Fremont (R)	285	1,342,345		114

1860

The presidential election of 1860 was conducted in an emotional cauldron, preceding and foreshadowing national uncertainty and unrest. The national scene was clouded by sectionalism and extremism. Recoiling from the election abuses of the Know-Nothings, four presidential candidates were offered to the voters of Maryland in this momentous year.

The Democratic party was severely split by the issues of the day and failed to unify behind a single presidential candidate. Its national convention began in April in Charleston, South Carolina, but was forced to adjourn after 45 delegates from nine states left the convention after a one-vote loss on a pro-slavery platform plank.²⁸ The convention was reconvened in Baltimore on June 18, 1860 but a credentials dispute led to delegates from 10 states (including a portion of the Maryland delegation) bolting the convention. The regular Democratic party nominated Stephen Douglas of Illinois for President while the bolting delegates nominated the party's current Vice President, John C. Breckinridge, for President under a Southern Democrat party label.

The Republican party nominated Abraham Lincoln of Illinois on the third ballot at its convention in Chicago. While recognizing a state's right "to order and control its own domestic institutions" the Republican party platform set itself apart from other parties by flatly opposing the extension of slavery, advocating a protective tariff and supporting transcontinental railroads for the development of business and industry.

The fourth presidential candidate was John Bell who received the nomination of the newly formed Constitutional Union party which met in Baltimore in May 1860. This coalition of conservative former Whigs and Know-Nothings denounced the sectionalism of the other political parties and simply made national unity the rallying cry of its campaign.²⁹

In Maryland the campaign and election quickly became a contest between the two splinter groups and candidates, Breckinridge of the Southern Democrats and Bell of the Constitutional Union party. Neither Lincoln, the Republican, nor Douglas, the regular Democrat, attracted significant support in Maryland. While states' rights and preserving the union were the main rhetoric of the campaign, slavery was an underlying issue whether as a moral or political consideration. In an address to the First Republican State Convention on April 26, 1860 Montgomery Blair noted the subject: