

The public mind in Maryland is not now ripe for emancipation, and no scheme for it has been proposed or discussed . . . The struggle in Maryland, as in the United States, is manifestly not for the preservation of this property, but for political supremacy; and the property interest in Negroes, and the prejudices implanted in the minds of others by the existence of slavery in their midst, are adroitly used by a political party, to hold possession of the Government.³⁰

Breckinridge narrowly won the popular vote over Bell—42,505 to 41,768—as Maryland cast all of its eight electoral votes for the Southern Democrat nominee. Voting was close between the two compromise candidates throughout the state. Breckinridge’s margin of victory was attained by a 2,353 vote plurality in Baltimore City which outweighed Bell’s edge in carrying 16 out of the 21 counties. The regular Democrat candidate, Douglas, polled 6,080 votes statewide, enough votes in nine of the state’s subdivisions to have perhaps influenced their results. The Republican candidacy of Abraham Lincoln attracted a meager 2,296 votes, or 2.50 percent, with his strongest showing in Allegany County (520 votes and 12.32 percent).

However, nationally the Republican party captured 18 states³¹ having 180 electoral votes which thrust Abraham Lincoln into the nation’s highest office at the nation’s most perilous time. Immediately after the results were known the southern states began implementing the movement toward secession from the union. Seven states (South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas) withdrew from the union prior to Lincoln’s inauguration on March 4, 1861. In Maryland the pressure for secession was loud and intense with extensive debate appearing in newspapers and periodicals. Numerous meetings and conventions were held at the local, county and state level by proponents and opponents of the secession issue.³² Under the guidance and leadership of Governor Thomas H. Hicks, Maryland equivocated in responding with secession pressures and ultimately stayed with the union.³³

Lincoln’s trip to Washington for his inauguration was marred by reports of a planned assassination attempt in Baltimore. This prompted Lincoln’s advisors to provide for his secretive passage through Baltimore in the middle of the night on February 22, 1861.³⁴ This presidential election in Maryland precipitated the most tense and uncertain feelings among its citizens of any election in the history of the state.

1860 ELECTION SUMMARY

| Candidate (Party) | Popular Vote | | Electoral Vote | |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|------|
| | Md. | U.S. | Md. | U.S. |
| John Bell (CU) | 41,768 | 590,901 | | 39 |
| John C. Breckinridge (SD) | 42,505 | 848,019 | 8 | 72 |
| Stephen A. Douglas (D) | 6,080 | 1,380,202 | | 12 |
| Abraham Lincoln (R) | 2,296 | 1,865,908 | | 180 |