

May 31, 1974.

Honorable John Hanson Briscoe
Speaker of the House of Delegates
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21404

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17, of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed House Bill 967.

This bill modifies the Sunday closing laws in Charles County to permit certain retail establishments to remain open, including those establishments which operate "with not more than 8 persons on any one shift on Sunday."

Prior to the enactment of House Bill 967, Charles County was governed by the general provisions of Article 27, §521 which prohibits the sale of merchandise on Sunday with certain exceptions, in those counties which have not enacted local laws relating to Sunday sales. House Bill 967, by adding new Section 534S to Article 27 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, intended to add Charles County to those counties which have enacted specific legislation in this area. Its provisions, in fact, are virtually identical to those existing for Anne Arundel and Calvert Counties with the exception that the law of the latter counties provides that automobile dealers may not be open on Sunday. See Article 27, §534N. Several other counties have enacted similar legislation allowing small businesses to remain open but, in each instance, there are provisions preventing automobile dealers from operating on Sunday. House Bill 967 does not contain such a prohibition.

I have received an overwhelming amount of correspondence requesting that I veto House Bill 967. This has come from not only all but one of the automobile dealers in Charles County, but also from automobile dealers throughout the State of Maryland and from a large number of citizens of Charles County. Their objections to the bill have been directed principally to the fact that with the signing of House Bill 967, Charles County will be the only County allowing automobile sales on Sunday. Although the bill purports to apply only to Charles County, it is clear that, if even one automobile dealer should elect to remain open on Sunday, economic competitive pressures will eventually force all automobile dealers in the County, and, as a consequence, dealers in surrounding counties to remain open. If this occurs, as is likely, the pressure will be exerted on other counties to relax their Sunday closing laws to