

Unionist sentiment solidified in Maryland as the war ground on. Recruiting grew to include black men. A Union Club in Baltimore was organized in spring 1863 and quickly formed a militia, and a variety of municipal and statewide elections—increasingly presided over by pro-Union election judges as soldiers became less ubiquitous at polling places—produced Unionist victories. The state legislature in March 1862 passed a wide-ranging "Treason Bill," which threatened death or imprisonment for lending aid and comfort to the enemy, engaging in acts of rebellion, belonging to organizations advocating secession, displaying "to public view what is commonly designated the Secession Flag, with a view and intent to excite seditious feelings," and inducing others to engage in any of these activities.<sup>3</sup>

Abraham Lincoln would capture 54 percent of the Maryland vote in his November 1864 reelection—a vast improvement from his 1860 showing in the state, when only a small percentage of the state's 54 percent Unionist vote had gone to him. Contrary to some claims, the soldier vote did not carry the state for Lincoln in 1864—subtracting his 2,800 soldier votes (to George McClellan's 321) from his total would have left him a margin of just over 51 percent.

Emancipation in the District of Columbia in April 1862 had made the nation's capital a magnet for runaway Maryland and Virginia slaves, while Union army camps in and near Maryland attracted increasing numbers of escaped, or "contraband," slaves. The risks taken by these men and women, and the recruitment of blacks into the Union army beginning in 1863, further undermined the state's crumbling artifice of bondage. Slavery throughout this middle period edged closer toward the abyss, pushed by black and white citizens alike who, by exploiting the cracks in the old Maryland slaveholder alliance, ensured its collapse.

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