

## Changing of the guard

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**Lexington Park, MD** - Ahead of the installations of new lawmakers in Washington and Annapolis, most of Maryland's local jurisdictions have now experienced the transition brought about by the Election of 2018. In brief, Charles County has three new commissioners—including a new board president; St. Mary's has one new commissioner and Calvert's new board is days away from taking office. The three outgoing members have said their goodbyes. Some of Maryland's home rule counties—including Prince George's and Anne Arundel—have new county executives. Several other offices in the Old Line State will have new individuals in charge.

In many cases, these changes are not the result of mandatory term limits, a concept that the U.S. presidency has had in place since the early 1950s and that Maryland similarly applies to the job of governor. In many instances, the individuals, people like Ken Robinson in Charles County; and Evan Slaughenhaupt and Pat Nutter in Calvert County, decided it was time to step aside. There are also a few individuals, locally and statewide, who sought, but were denied an additional four years in office.

The retiring political figures and the repudiation by voters of an incumbent are a testimony to American Democracy—although the vanquished may not immediately feel that way. Term limits make for an easy call. However, an incumbent who feels the proper time to pass the torch has arrived and voters craving a change speak volumes—in a much more amplified way than a term limit mandate ever could. There are not too many elective offices that were ever intended to be lifetime jobs. Entrenchment was something the Founding Fathers railed against when they stood up to the King of England. While having someone with vast institutional knowledge serving in a leadership role is desirable, at some point either the incumbent or the majority of voters must speak up and declare the end has arrived.

There is indeed a steep learning curve for any new officeholder and all the state's newly elected will need the aid of staff, fellow elected officials and constituents to get a grip on the reins of power.

If you were a public official, especially one who chose not to seek reelection, we hope you realize that statesmanship does not expire with your term in office. To the voters who participated in the Democratic process, your work doesn't go on hiatus either. Those who govern will need your ideas, your feedback and your criticism.

Aspiring to hold an elective office is an amazing answer to a call for responsibility. It's a daunting risk that relatively few decide to take. Teddy Roosevelt said it best. "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

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