

## Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission



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### STAFF STATUS REPORT

The Commission held its organizational meeting in September 2008, and began the task of planning the commemorative events and activities. The Commission developed a list of proposed commemorative activities designed to engage citizens throughout the Commonwealth, and to facilitate Virginia's representation and participation in the National observance of the bicentennial of the War of 1812.

During the 2008 interim the Commission met several times and received presentations pertaining to the history of the War of 1812 and its statutory tasks and responsibilities, developed a bicentennial theme, adopted a commemoration work plan, identified bicentennial activities planned by other states and entities, discussed options for funding proposed activities, and appointed the Advisory Council, which consists of representatives of various historical organizations and societies, to assist the Commission in its work. Implementation of the Council was deferred until after the 2009 Session. The Commission's work was not funded by the 2008 General Assembly, which presented significant challenges to accomplishing its work. Therefore, the Commission offered legislation in the 2009 Session that extends the time by which the Commission must obtain a separate appropriation for its work until the 2012-2014 biennium. During the 2009, 2010, and 2011 interims, the Commission may be funded from the operating budgets of the House and Senate Clerks offices upon the approval of the Joint Rules Committee.

Several opportunities for participation and collaboration in bicentennial-related programs and events have been extended to the Commission. They include the following:

**Membership in the Maryland Star-Spangled 200 listserv.** The listserv is designed to "provide a forum for partners to request information, exchange ideas, and promote programs and events for the upcoming bicentennial commemoration." The staff joined the listserv on behalf of the Commission in January 2009.

**Southern Maryland Star-Spangled 200 Conference.** The conference is presented by the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission and will be held on June 25, 2009, 9:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m., at Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons, Maryland. The cost of attendance is \$45. Although the registration deadline was May 29, 2009, spaces may still be available.

**National Park Service Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail.** This legislation was enacted by Congress in May 2008. "The Trail follows 290 miles of land and water routes that commemorate the Chesapeake Campaign of the War of 1812 and the Birth of our National Anthem. The Trail purposes are to foster preservation and interpretation of Trail resources and to enhance recreational opportunities for the public. The designation includes Tangier and Alexandria, and Trail interpretation and access will likely be explored along the Virginia shores of the Potomac and include interpretation of the flight of the Madisons and rescue of the national documents. The various skirmishes that happened along the shores of the Chesapeake in Virginia could be interpreted through the Trail as well."

The staff was invited to serve on the NPS Advisory Council, and staff has accepted the invitation.

**Historic Site Marking.** Mr. Steve Dryden, Board member of the Fairfax Trails and Streams, has proposed that the Commission become involved in the marking of the historic site on the Arlington/Fairfax County border near Chain Bridge where the Declaration of Independence was hidden on the night that Washington, DC was burned by the British.

Mr. Dryden will address the Commission at the June 17 meeting concerning the Commission's participation in this event.

**Craney Island Marker Dedication.** The Commission has been invited to the dedication of the historic marker of the Battle of Craney Island at the entrance of the Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve on July 20, 2009, from 11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m. A barbecue will follow the dedication and the cost is approximately \$20 per person.

## **Staff Proposals**

In light of funding limitations, it is proposed that the Commission undertake the following:

1. Identify proposed commemorative activities on the adopted work plan with funding implications, develop a budget for such expenses, and formally request approval of such expenditures of the Joint Rules Committee.
2. Designate staff and/or members of the Advisory Council to represent the Commission at selected programs and events, if funding for attendance/participation can be assumed through typical staffing functions and by the organization that the Advisory Council member represents.
3. Implement those commemorative activities on the adopted work plan which do not require funding, with the assistance of the Advisory Council.
4. Initiate, with the assistance of the Advisory Council, a fundraising campaign to fund the Commission's bicentennial activities, including seeking appropriate grant and philanthropic funding.
5. Direct staff to identify and pursue other bicentennial opportunities, statewide and nationally, which do not require funding to ensure Virginia's representation in such events.

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