

# Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission



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## STAFF BRIEFING PAPER

### Legislative History

The 2008 Virginia General Assembly created the Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission in the legislative branch of state government to prepare for and commemorate the bicentennial anniversary of Virginia's participation in the American War of 1812. The Commission is authorized to plan commemorative events and activities, encourage research to promote historical literacy and understanding of the war, and support organizations throughout the state as they plan commemorative events.

The legislation was chief patroned in the House of Delegates by Delegate M. Kirkland Cox and in the Senate of Virginia by Senator Stephen H. Martin. Pursuant to the enabling legislation, there are 12 members of the Commission as follows: Delegates M. Kirkland Cox of Colonial Heights; Rosalyn R. Dance of Petersburg; Christopher K. Peace of Mechanicsville; Kenneth R. Plum of Reston; R. Lee Ware, Jr. of Powhatan; Senators George L. Barker of Alexandria, Stephen H. Martin of Chesterfield; Frederick M. Quayle of Suffolk; Mr. Peter E. Broadbent, Jr., Esquire of Richmond, representing the Virginia Society of the War of 1812; Mrs. Nancy G. Heuser of Colonial Heights, representing the Virginia Society of the U.S. Daughters of the War of 1812; and Dr. Billy K. Cannaday, Jr., Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Dr. Sandra G. Treadway, Librarian of Virginia, who serve ex officio with voting privileges. Legislative members and ex officio members of the Commission are appointed to serve terms coincident with their terms of office, and nonlegislative citizen members are appointed for a term of two years. The chairman and vice-chairman of the Commission must be elected from among its membership, and must be members of the General Assembly.

### Other Statutory Provisions

**Voting.** The Commission's governing statute provides that "no recommendation of the Commission shall be adopted if a majority of the House members or a majority of the Senate members appointed to the Commission (i) vote against the recommendation and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the Commission."

**Compensation.** Legislative and nonlegislative citizen members of the Commission are compensated in accordance with §§ [30-19.12](#) and [2.2-2813](#), respectively, for the performance of their duties. All members of the Commission shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided by law. All compensation and expenses must be paid from existing appropriations to the Commission, or, if unfunded, must be approved by the Joint Rules Committee. Although \$8,640 GF has been appropriated each year of the biennium to cover the direct costs of the Commission, it is important to note that funding for the administration, operation, and work of the Commission was not provided by the 2008 General Assembly. Therefore, expenses associated with the work of the Commission must be approved by the Joint Rules Committee. It is also critical that the Commission obtain separate state funding in the 2009 Session to avoid automatic expiration on July 1, 2009.

**Nonstate funds.** The Commission is authorized to solicit, accept, use, and dispose of gifts, grants, donations, bequests, or other funds or real or personal property for the purpose of aiding or facilitating the work of the Commission. In accordance with the appropriation act, the Commission may procure supplies, services, and property, and make or enter into contracts, leases, or other legal agreements as it may deem necessary to carry out its duties. However, the Commission may not enter into any contract, lease, or other legal agreements that extends beyond 2015.

**The Fund.** A special nonreverting fund, known as the Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Fund, has been created in the state treasury to receive gifts, grants, donations, bequests, or other funds from any source that be received by the Commission for its work. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund will remain in the Fund and will not revert to the general fund. The moneys in the Fund must be used solely for the purpose of enabling the Commission to perform its duties.

### **Powers and Duties**

The Commission shall:

1. Plan, develop and carry out programs and activities appropriate to commemorate the bicentennial of the American War of 1812.
2. Promote and encourage research and scholarship to increase historical literacy of the American War of 1812 and the important role that Virginia played therein.
3. Encourage civic, historical, educational, economic, and other organizations throughout Virginia to organize and participate in activities to expand the understanding and appreciation of the significance of the American War of 1812.
4. Encourage the development and conduct of programs designed to involve all citizens in activities that commemorate the American War of 1812.
5. Submit to the General Assembly and the Governor an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Commission no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly, and an annual report for publication as a state document.
6. Appoint and establish an Advisory Council composed of nonlegislative citizens at large who have knowledge of the American War of 1812 history and an interest in its bicentennial commemoration. Members of the Advisory Council must serve without compensation or reimbursement of expenses.
7. Perform such other duties, functions, and activities as may be necessary to facilitate and implement the statutory objectives."

### **Staff Support**

Staff of the Division of Legislative Services is the primary staff to the Commission and by law must provide all legal, research, policy analysis, and other services to the Commission. Administrative staff support, e.g., logistics, meeting arrangements, polling, and recording votes, etc., for the Commission will be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates. Technical assistance will be provided by the Library of Virginia, and all agencies of the Commonwealth must provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

### **Expiration of the Commission**

The Commission will expire on July 1, 2015.

## **Background: War of 1812**

The War of 1812, or the "Second War of Independence," was fought between the United States and Great Britain from June 18, 1812 through February 18, 1815, in Virginia and Maryland, and along the Canadian border, the western frontier, the Gulf Coast, and through naval engagements in the Great Lakes and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. At the end of the "American Revolution in 1783, resentment festered due to the failure of the British to withdraw from American territory along the Great Lakes, their backing of Native Americans on the frontiers, and their unwillingness to sign commercial agreements favorable to the United States" (The War of 1812, <http://www.gatewayno.com/history/War1812.html>).

Frustrations mounted over British maritime policies, the violation of American rights on the seas, the impressments of Americans into British naval service, and the adverse economic effect of the untenable situation for the fledging democracy galvanized with other social and political forces of the time to create a climate for war. President James Madison declared war with Great Britain on June 18, 1812, and ended with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814, although word of the treaty did not reach the United States until after the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815.

"An estimated 70,000 Virginians served during the War of 1812. There were some 73 armed encounters with the British that took place in Virginia during the war, and Virginians actively fought in Maryland, Virginia, and Ohio and in naval engagements. The nation's capitol, strategically located off the Chesapeake Bay, was a prime target for the British, and the coast of Virginia figured prominently in the Atlantic theatre of operations. The American War of 1812 helped forge a national identity among the American states and laid the groundwork for a national system of homeland defense and a professional military within the United States. The bicentennial of the American War of 1812 provides an opportunity for Virginians and all Americans to commemorate the independence for which our forefathers so bravely fought" (HB1391/SB 383, 2008).

## **Commemoration Plan**

### **Purpose of the Commemoration**

- Recognition of the bicentennial anniversary of Virginia's participation in the American War of 1812.
- Education of the citizenry regarding the significance of the American War of 1812 through appropriate commemorative events and activities.
- Promotion of research for historical literacy and understanding of the war.
- Support organizations throughout the Commonwealth engaged in planning commemorative events.

### **Theme**

- A theme should be selected that resonates throughout the Commonwealth, emphasizing the significance and legacy of the War of 1812, and Virginia's role in the war.
- A thematic approach should be used to highlight key aspects of the war during each year of the commemoration.
- A thematic approach should be used initially during the organizational phase of the Commission for informational purposes and to facilitate planning.

### **Message of the Commemoration**

- The message of the Commemoration should provoke an emotional investment among students and citizens to learn about the war and its meaning to nationhood, and attract citizen participation and involvement in commemorative programs and activities.
- The message should provide a bridge from the past (War of 1812) to contemporary events, stressing the relevance of history to current events. For example, James Madison governed during the only actual invasion of the United States by a foreign country which included the burning of the White House. The relevance of the War of 1812 to contemporary issues includes national unity, foreign relations, war, federalism, and the cost of independence.

### **Target Audience**

- War of 1812 descendants and enthusiasts
- Academicians
- Historians
- Policy Makers
- General public
- Public and private school students K-12
- Students at public and private institutions of higher education
- Classroom teachers
- College history faculty and staff
- Advocacy groups and organizations
- Others

### **Suggested Commemorative Events and Activities**

- Several ideas have been discussed among staff to commemorate the War of 1812, including placing a priority on education, partnering with tourism to promote War of 1812 related sites in the Commonwealth, and collaborating with James Madison University for research assistance and commemorative events. The following provides a snapshot of our deliberation.
  - Inaugural Event
  - Interim Events and Activities
    - Lecture Series
    - Symposia
    - Conference
    - Concert
    - Scholarly publications
    - Exhibits
    - Book signings
    - Collaborations with other key states
    - Tours of related War of 1812 sites in Virginia
    - Moment in Time with Dan Roberts
  - Concluding Event
  - Statewide and local activities

### **Communications, Public Relations, and Media**

- \*Develop the Commission's website for the dissemination of information regarding the commemoration (*\*website is a part of DLS*)
- Develop a public relations campaign
- Establish a media relations packet
- Issue press releases at appropriate times
- Conduct interviews and press conferences
- Write op eds and articles for publication

### **Partnerships and Collaborations**

- Identify local, state, and federal agencies with which to partner for the commemoration.
- Seek collaborative efforts with community organizations and professional associations.

### **Funding**

- The Commission should determine whether a fundraising campaign to cover the costs of the commemoration is necessary.
- The Commission should determine whether to request funding of the 2009 General Assembly to cover the costs of the commemoration.
- The Commission should determine how and what means will be employed in the interim to the costs of the commemoration, e.g. Joint Rules Committee approval of expenses, partnership and collaboration with other legislative, executive, and entities with independent budgets.

### **Schedule**

- Establish a schedule for the planning and conduct of the commemoration, its programs, events, and activities.
- Establish goals for the commemoration.
- Develop an overall strategy and criteria for each year of the commemoration.

### **Legacy of the Commemoration**

- Identify the objectives to be accomplished by the commemoration of the War of 1812
- What should be the commemoration's legacy?

### **Duties and Responsibilities of Advisory Council**

- Act in an *advisory capacity* to the Commission regarding plans proposed for the commemoration.
- Assist the Commission as requested in identifying historians, scholars, and other interested persons with whom it can collaborate or seek further assistance.
- Make recommendations to the Commission as requested to facilitate an effective and successful commemoration of the War of 1812 throughout the Commonwealth.
- Carry out such other tasks as the Commission may require.

## Recommendations for Advisory Council Membership

- Historians
  - Generalists on American history
  - Specialists on James Madison
  - Specialists on the War of 1812
- Educators
- Virginia Department of Education
- State Council of Higher Education
- Council of Independent Colleges
- Virginia Historical Society
- Library of Virginia
- General Society of the War of 1812
- Virginia Society of the War of 1812
- Virginia Society of the National Society of the U.S. Daughters of 1812
- The Madison Center, James Madison University
- Warren County Historical Society
- James Madison Museum
- James Monroe Memorial Foundation
- Library of Congress
- Montpelier
- Organization of American Historians
- Virginia Department of Tourism
- National Park Service
- Other local, state, and federal organizations
- Relevant Professional associations

## Proposed Commemoration Plan

### Phase I: Planning and Organization, 2009-2011

**September 30, 2008**—Organizational Meeting, Richmond

- Election of chairman and vice chairman
- Initial Staff Briefing
- Presentations from Virginia Society, National Society of the U.S. Daughters of 1812; Virginia Society of the War of 1812; and James Madison Museum

**October 2008**—Prelude to Mr. Madison's War, The Madison Center, Harrisonburg

**November 2008**—Causes of the War

**December 2008**—Identification of Funding Needs

- Adoption of Commemorative Planned Programs and Events
- Schedule for Commemoration Programs and Events
- Identification of Potential Partners

**January—April 2009 (*Interim for Legislative Session*)**

- Staff work on the commemoration continues as appropriate

**May 2009**—The War Years

**June 2009**—Impact of War

**July 2009**—Legacy

**August 2009—May 2012**

### Phase II: The Commemoration, 2012-2015

- Inaugural Event(s)
- Schedule of Programs and Events
- Closing Event(s)

**Staff**

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