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War of 1812 Bicentennial means moo-lah for Baltimore

By: [Liz Farmer](#)

I attended Visit Baltimore’s biannual Town Hall meeting last week and saw a presentation on the tourism opportunities the 1812 Bicentennial will provide for Baltimore, and one thing was clear — this could be a tourism-driven cash cow for Maryland.

The presentation by Jeff Buchheit, director of the Baltimore National Heritage Area office, pointed to Virginia’s 400th anniversary celebration of the founding of Jamestown for an estimate of the potential tourism impact. In 2007, the “[birth of America](#)” celebration generated \$1.2 billion in sales and created roughly 20,600 jobs while the state and county took in \$22 million and \$6.4 million in tax revenue, respectively.



That’s nothing to sneeze at, especially with Maryland’s strapped state budget.

“Cultural tourists spend money and this means big money,” Buchheit said.

Baltimore’s big year probably won’t be until 2014 because that’s the 200th anniversary of the September 1814 bombardment of [Ft. McHenry](#) and Francis Scott Key writing what became our national anthem. But beginning in 2012, the 200th anniversary of the U.S.’s entrance into the war between France and England, you’ll start seeing the signs: in two years, Maryland will produce a state license plate commemorating the anniversary of the war, and the U.S. Navy and Blue Angels will visit Baltimore that year. They’ll return in 2014 for the Ft. McHenry anniversary.

Buchheit’s office is also working on a traveling exhibit that will show around the country in the coming years to generate interest in visiting Maryland for the anniversary. He also has \$60,000 in funding from grants to hire a full-time coordinator to plan events for the celebration.

And while there’s a big potential payoff in 2014 for the Ft. McHenry celebration, the real payoff will be in the impression Baltimore leaves with tourists.

“The goal is to hopefully encourage these tourists to come back again and again,” Buchheit said.