

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 1068 (Senator Ramirez)  
Budget and Taxation

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Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 2011 - Prince George's County -  
Battle of Bladensburg Visitor Center and Monument

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This bill changes the grantee of the Battle of Bladensburg Visitor Center and Monument project, as established by the Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 2011. The current grantee is the Board of Directors of Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc. The bill specifies that the project's grantee is the Board of Trustees of the Aman Memorial Trust, Inc.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2012.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill does not materially affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill does not materially affect the operations or finances of Prince George's County.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Chapter 396 of 2011 authorized up to \$125,000 for the construction and renovation of the Battle of Bladensburg Visitor Center and Monument in Bladensburg. The required matching funds may consist of real property or funds expended prior to June 1, 2011, but not in-kind donations. The grantee has until June 1, 2013, to present evidence that the required matching funds will be provided. The funds must be

encumbered by the Board of Public Works or expended by the grantee by December 1, 2014.

**Background:** The Battle of Bladensburg was an important battle during the War of 1812. For the first two years of the War of 1812, the British had been preoccupied with the war against Napoleon in Europe. By the spring of 1814, Napoleon had been defeated and had been exiled to the island of Elba. Thus, large numbers of British troops were now free to be sent to North America.

On August 20, 1814, over 4,500 seasoned British troops landed in the little town of Benedict in Charles County on the Patuxent River. The American commanders were certain that the British troops were headed to the strategically important city of Baltimore, not toward the relatively unimportant city of Washington. That the British would, as they ultimately did, launch an attack against both cities was hardly considered.

Over the next few days the British troops moved up the Patuxent River to Upper Marlboro. American commanders were uncertain where to make a stand. Around noon on August 24, 1814, approximately 2,600 British troops marched in to Bladensburg, which was defended by 400 sailors, 1,450 local militia, and 420 regulars. By four o'clock the battle was over. The lack of regular American troops, the panic caused by the Congreve rockets (known for their red glare), and the American troops' poor position led to the American defeat. However, the British suffered three times the American casualties.

The British victory at Bladensburg left Washington exposed to attack. President Madison and his cabinet were forced to flee into the surrounding countryside, while later that day the British entered the city and burned the U.S. Capital building, the White House, and many other public buildings. Halted by hurricane force winds and fears that the Americans would quickly regroup, the tired, ill, and wounded British troops marched back to their ships.

Several of the British stragglers and deserters were arrested by citizens in Upper Marlboro. When the British commanders learned of the incident, they sent a small force back to Upper Marlboro and arrested William Beanes, a well respected doctor and town elder. Following his arrest, Georgetown lawyer Francis Scott Key and U.S. Agent for Prisoner Exchange John S. Skinner went to secure Bean's release from the British. They brought with them letters from troops who testified as to the compassion that was received while tended to in Bladensburg. Brought on board one of the British vessels, Key would see the battle in Baltimore raging on (with Congreve rockets) and the flag standing at the end of the battle, leading to the writing of the Star Spangled Banner.

Along with the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc., the Aman Memorial Trust was one of the original partners on the project.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Prince George's County, Department of General Services, Battle of Bladensburg Task Force, History of War, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 11, 2012  
ncs/ljm

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