

2006 Word of the Year Nominations

For the American Dialect Society vote to be held January 5, 2007

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anchor baby: a child born of an immigrant in the United States, and a device by which a family can find legal foothold here, since such children are automatically allowed to choose American citizenship. Also known as an **anchor child**, a very young immigrant who will later sponsor citizenship for family members still abroad. While “anchor baby” dates back to 1996 and “anchor child” to 1987, an increased focus on immigration in the United States brought “anchor baby” to greater prominence in 2006.

chief memory officer: a person in charge of maintaining an organization’s collective knowledge, experience and history. Although this term dates to 2000 or earlier and Epson used it in promoting its imaging products, the position is being seen as vital to the continuance of institutional memory, especially in a world where obsolescence of digital media is so prevalent.

data Valdez: an accidental release of a large quantity of private or privileged information. Named after the 1989 oil spill by the *Exxon Valdez* in Prince William Sound, Alaska. This term is nominated because of a nationwide increased focus on personal digital privacy and because of large data spills like that at the University of Southern California (270,000 names compromised in 2005), the US Department of Veterans

affairs (information on 26 million people put at risk earlier this year), and UCLA (information on 800,000 people exposed late this year).

digiroid: a test photograph taken with a cheap digital camera before a more expensive or complicated one is used. From *digital* plus *Polaroid*. Nominating this term serves as a marker that film cameras are now well-outnumbered by digital cameras and are on their way to becoming luxury or niche items.

Fox lips: lips colored and lined with makeup to seem more prominent, said of female anchors on Fox News.

God wink: something taken as evidence that a higher power is at work; a coincidence. Popularized by Squire Rushnell in his 2003 book, “When God Winks,” and in later books, though it achieved its greatest use and popularity in 2006. A similar term is **God breeze**, a commonplace epiphany or revelation.

human directional: a person who flips, twirls and dances with signs to direct potential buyers to new homes in California.

Hummer house: an overly large single-family residence. Synonyms from earlier years are **starter castle**, **faux chateau** and **McMansion**.

husband-sitter: a man hired to keep a woman’s husband out of trouble. Also **hubby-sitter**. This year’s gossip said Britney Spears had hired one to mind her husband, Kevin Federline, though apparently it wasn’t enough as the couple appears to be on its way to divorce.

Johnny Jihad: a Muslim or Muslim combatant. Although this term dates to 1996 or earlier, its heaviest usage by far has occurred since 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq.

Katrina brain: forgetfulness, lack of concentration and failure to follow through on activities, characteristic of the post-traumatic stress of Hurricane Katrina. Other terms to come out of the late-2005 disaster are **Katrina crud**, a general name for a variety of respiratory ailments; **Katrina time**, the extended waits for lawyers and trial dates by prisoners in Louisiana; **Katrician**, a derogatory name for a Katrina evacuee, used in advertisements by a Texas gun dealer to portray the evacuees as criminals.

marble ceiling: the barrier that prevents women from advancing in American politics, often used in discussions of the rise of Nancy Pelosi. Sister term to **glass ceiling**.

Nork: a generally derogatory name for a North Korean. A less common parallel term is **Souk**, a South Korean.

seven-thousand-mile screwdriver: micromanagement of a situation from afar. Lately used to describe the difficulties of managing the war in Iraq. The number of miles used varies depending upon the speaker and the situation.

sharrow: an arrow-like design painted on a roadway to mark a bicycling route. First appeared in bike-friendly cities like San Francisco but is now the norm for cities designating bike paths on city streets.

sudden jihad syndrome: an outburst of violence from a seemingly stable and normal Muslim. Coined by Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum.