American Dialect Society

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(For immediate release)

January 6, 2012

"Occupy" 2011 Word of the Year, as voted by American Dialect Society

HILTON PORTLAND—JAN. 6—In its 22nd annual words of the year vote, with record attendance, the American Dialect Society voted "occupy" (verb, noun, and combining form referring to the Occupy protest movement) as the word of the year for 2011.

Presiding at the Jan. 6 voting session were ADS Executive Secretary Allan Metcalf of MacMurray College, and Ben Zimmer, chair of the New Words Committee of the American Dialect Society and executive producer of the Visual Thesaurus and Vocabulary.com. Zimmer is also a language columnist for the *Boston Globe*.

"It's a very old word, but over the course of just a few months it took on another life and moved in new and unexpected directions, thanks to a national and global movement," Zimmer said. "The movement itself was powered by the word."

Word of the Year is interpreted in its broader sense as "vocabulary item"—not just words but phrases. The words or phrases do not have to be brand-new, but they have to be newly prominent or notable in the past year. The vote is the longest-running such vote anywhere, the only one not tied to commercial interests, and *the* word-of-the-year event up to which all others lead. It is fully informed by the members' expertise in the study of words, but it is far from a solemn occasion. Members in the 122-year-old organization include linguists, lexicographers, etymologists, grammarians, historians, researchers, writers, authors, editors, professors, university students, and independent scholars. In conducting the vote, they act in fun and do not pretend to be officially inducting words into the English language. Instead they are highlighting that language change is normal, ongoing, and entertaining.

In a companion vote, sibling organization the American Name Society voted "Arab Spring" as Name of the Year for 2011 in its eighth annual name-of-the-year contest. It refers to popular political uprisings in Middle Eastern countries.

AMERICAN DIALECT SOCIETY VOTE TALLIES

The number after each nomination is the number of votes it received. Numbers separated by slash marks indicate a run-off. Voting totals for each category might not be identical because the number of voters might have changed for each category.

WORD OF THE YEAR

occupy - verb, noun, and combining form referring to the Occupy protest movement. 82/174 WINNER

FOMO - acronym for "Fear of Missing Out," describing anxiety over being inundated by information on social media. 41/28

the 99%, 99 percenters - those held to be at a financial or political disadvantage to the top moneymakers, the one-percenters. 43/24

humblebrag - expression of false humility, especially by celebrities on Twitter. 30 **job creator** - a member of the top one-percent of moneymakers. 4

MOST USEFUL

humblebrag - expression of false humility, especially by celebrities on Twitter. 87/121 WINNER occupy - verb, noun, and combining form referring to the Occupy protest movement. 70/102
 FOMO - acronym for "Fear of Missing Out," describing anxiety over being inundated by information on social media. 25

tablet - lightweight portable computer with a touchscreen to input data. 30

MOST CREATIVE

Mellencamp - a woman who has aged out of being a "cougar" (after John Cougar Mellencamp). 103 **WINNER**

bunga bunga - name for sex parties allegedly involving former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. 21

kardash - unit of measurement consisting of 72 days, after the short-lived marriage of Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries (coined by Weird Al Yankovic). 82

put a bird on it - to add artistic flair to something, usu, used ironically or humorously. 23

MOST UNNECESSARY

 $\bf bi\text{-}winning$ - term used by Charlie Sheen to describe himself pridefully, dismissing accusations of being bipolar. $77/156\,WINNER$

amazeballs - slang form for "amazing." 82/85

planking - posing for a photograph, esp. in a public place, with one's body in a stiff, prone position, for circulation online. 13

Qwikster: short-lived Netflix spinoff of its DVD rental service, separated from its streaming. 44

MOST OUTRAGEOUS

assholocracy - rule by obnoxious multi-millionaires. 166 WINNER
deather - one who doubts the official story of the killing of Osama bin Laden. 35
botoxionist - a doctor who administers Botox injections. 1

MOST EUPHEMISTIC

job creator - a member of the top one-percent of moneymakers. 111 **WINNER**

artisan, artisanal - faux-fancy term used to describe food and other products. 78

regime alteration - alternative to "regime change" promoted by Obama administration in some Middle Eastern countries. 19

sugar-coated Satan sandwich: something bad on the inside that looks good on the outside, as used by Missouri U.S Congressman Emanuel Cleaver. 1

MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

cloud - online space for the large-scale processing and storage of data. 155 WINNER
 Arab Spring - a series of popular uprisings in Middle Eastern countries against dictatorial regimes. 54

tiger mom, tiger mother - an exceedingly strict parent (after Amy Chua's memoir, "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother").

LEAST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

brony - adult male fan of the "My Little Pony" cartoon franchise. 103 WINNER

Tebowing - posing for photograph praying on one knee, after Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow. 47

9-9-9 - tax plan proposed by Herman Cain (9% business tax, 9% personal income tax, 9% federal sales tax). 65

OCCUPY WORDS (new category)

the 99%, 99 percenters - those held to be at a financial or political disadvantage to the top moneymakers, the one-percenters. n-percenters, n-percent. 219 WINNER

occupy - verb, noun, and combining form referring to the Occupy protest movement. 17 **people's mic, human microphone** - method of amplifying a person's speech by having surrounding people repeat it line by line 7

twinkling - system of wiggly hand gestures to register approval or disapproval. 9

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Founded in 1889, the American Dialect Society is dedicated to the study of the English language in North America, and of other languages, or dialects of other languages, influencing it or influenced by it. ADS members are linguists, lexicographers, etymologists, historians, grammarians, academics, editors, writers, and independent scholars in the fields of English, foreign languages, and other disciplines. The society also publishes the quarterly journal American Speech.

The American Dialect Society began choosing Words of the Year in 1990. Winners are listed below. A full account of the previous choices may be found on the American Dialect Society's website, www.americandialect.org.

Not all words chosen for a particular year are destined to become permanent additions to the vocabulary. Y2K in 1999 and chad in 2000 are examples of prominent terms that faded quickly. An explanation of which words are likely to succeed may be found in Predicting New Words: The Secrets of Their Success by Allan Metcalf.

American Dialect Society Words of Previous Years are at http://americandialect.org/woty

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