

Nominations for the 2008 Word of the Year
to be voted on by the American Dialect Society
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<http://americandialect.org/woty2008/>

Barnhart's Words of 2008 by David K. Barnhart
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The national election in the United States certainly played an important role in the development of English vocabulary. From the political realm:

absentee-vote, *v.* [=To vote using an absentee ballot]

big-umbrella politics [=political policies which encourage people of different attitudes to join together to support a single candidate]

blagojevich-gate [=the political scandal which has engulfed Governor Rod Blagojevich of Illinois]

get (or jump) in the box [= "to get on board," especially in a political campaign]

Bradley effect. [=The discrepancy between what people say to pollsters and how they vote in a political race in which race is possible issue.

bus: (throw) under the box [=to sacrifice someone for one's own gain, especially of a campaign worker in politics]

change [=as of administration and its accompanying policies]

cyberwhisper campaign [=a whisper campaign conducted on the Internet]

early-vote, *v.* [=To vote by using a mail-in ballot before election day]

exit plan [=a schedule for withdrawal of troops from Iraq; formerly called *exit strategy*, from the Vietnam War]

-gate. A combining form designating a political scandal, as in *Palingate*, *McCaingate*, *Obamagate*, *Spitzergate*, *Clintongate*, *Huckabeegate*, etc. Probably *Blagojevich-gate* is the most recent (but hardly characteristic of the year). *Wardrobegate* and *bittergate* show that not all *-gate* words are formed on personal names. cf. *Troopergate*. The proliferation of these is substantial especially in an election year.

hockey mom [patterned after *soccer mom* of the 1980's???....]

Joe the Plumber [=a generalized image of a blue collar worker, especially self-employed] (This reminds one of *Lenny Skutnik moment* from the 1980's.)

kryptonite [=something or someone unwanted]

lipstick on a pig [=the answer to the question “What’s the difference between a hockey mom and a pig?”]

Mulligan primary [=a do-over primary election] (It didn’t happen, but someday?)

Obama-. [=The last name of President-elect Barack Obama combined with suffixes, as in *Obamanation*, *Obamanomics*, and *Obamacan*. Both Bushes, the Clintons, Nixon, Reagan, even Ford and Carter. There are zillions of these, probably with many more to come.]

Palin effect or Sarah Palin effect [=the impact, especially negative, of the selection of Governor Sara Palin to be Senator John McCain’s running mate]

pay-to-play politics [*pay to play* in the context of politics can be traced to the early 1980’s, maybe further]

play Waldo or play where’s Waldo [= to challenge someone for not being where one thinks they should be or doing the work one should be doing]

post-racial [=a period in which people no longer consider a person’s race as a significant consideration, especially in American political campaigning]

Sam’s Club Republican [=a registered Republican who shops at Sam’s Club or similar discount stores]

Spitzergate [=the political scandal that led to the resignation of newly elected Governor Eliot Spitzer of New York]

superdelegate [=Not because it’s new but because so many made such a fuss over them.]

Troopergate [Yet, again! *Troopergate* began in a different episode in the 1990’s. It arose earlier in 2008 in New York and then moved to Alaska.]

wardropegate [see below at “fashion”]

The recession of 2008, may well trump the election for long-term impact of the words it has employed. From the activity in Economics:

bailout

BRIC [=Brazil, Russian, India, and China: These countries viewed as a powerful economic bloc]

credit default swap or default credit swap, *Abbreviation:* CDS [=]

daycation [=time off from work take as a day here or a day there]

e-layaway

FSBO [=for sale by owner]

recession

staycation [=time off from work in which a person does not travel far from home]

201(k) [=a retirement account, especially a 401(k), which has been greatly reduced in value due to the current recession]

unemployment [=a condition that has reached a very large number of people in the workforce]

The entertainment industry has continued to occupy people's linguistic inventiveness. From entertainment:

microblogging [=engaging in a blog with typically very brief message, as on TWITTER]

Oprah effect [with political overtones] [=the influence Oprah Winfrey has on her listenership, especially to cause them to accept or reject something or someone]

personal seating license (PSL) [=... in a sports arena]

Tweet [=a message conducted through TWITTER]

Twitter [=a specific Web site that enables people to communicate through brief messages]

The residents of computerdome continues to conger up interesting words:

cloud computing [=]

crowd sourcing [=reliance upon a widely distributed internet solicitation for feedback]

MOOFing [=mobile out of office] (also *-er*, ...)

From engineering and technology:

CFL [=compact fluorescent light bulb]

genome engineering [=genetic engineering on a scale needed to reconstruct a mammoth, Neanderthal, or similarly long extinct animal]

wrap rage [=overreaction to the toughness of rigid plastic packaging]

From the world of fashion:

fauxhawk [=a haircut which resembles but is not quite as severe as a Mohawk]

Wardrobegate (also in politics) [=the dustup over excessive spending on fashions for VP candidate Sara Palin]

From transportation:

kiss 'n' fly zone [=the drop-off “no-parking” zone at an airport terminal]