

## Nominations for the 2009 Word of the Year

to be voted on by the American Dialect Society

January 8th in Baltimore

<http://americandialect.org/woty2009/>

**Nominated by Grant Barrett**

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**aporkalypse** Undue worry and unnecessary acts in response to swine flu, including removing non-essential kisses from Mexican telenovelas and the mass slaughter of pigs in Egypt.

**athey** An atheist. Usually derogatory.

**birther** A person who believes Barack Obama was not born in the United States and, therefore, is disqualified to be president.

**bonus tax** A levy on bonuses given to employees of companies which received Federal bailout funds.

**botax** A proposed levy which would be charged on cosmetic procedures and surgeries. It would be used to help pay for healthcare reform. A play on *Botox*, a trade name for a substance used to smooth skin wrinkles.

**car tone** Music or ambient noise proposed for use by electric cars, whose quietness otherwise makes them go unnoticed by pedestrians.

**Cash for Clunkers** A government-sponsored program in which older automobiles were exchanged for pollution credits or rebates on newer and more fuel-efficient models. First popular ca1990 but resurgent in 2009.

**Chimerica** The intertwined economies of China and the US, which together dominate the world economy. First popularized by Niall Ferguson in his 2008 book, *The Ascent of Money*.

**conflict minerals** Gold, tin, tungsten and tantalum, widely used in electronic devices and commonly mined in politically unstable countries or regions. Related to *conflict diamonds*.

**cow tax** A supposed fee (not passed) for permits for methane emissions, which was portrayed by some opponents as tantamount to a per-head charge on cattle because of the ruminants' creation of methane.

**crash blossom** A headline which can be misconstrued, such as "Shark Attacks Puzzle Experts." Will Shortz is not in jeopardy; the sharks are just confounding scientists.

**death panel** A supposed committee of doctors and/or bureaucrats who would decide which patients were allowed to receive treatment, ostensibly leaving the rest to die.

**deather** Someone who believes the government has *death panels* in its healthcare reform plan.

**Dracula sneeze** Covering one's mouth with the crook of one's elbow when sneezing, seen as similar to popular portrayals of the vampire Dracula, in which he hides the lower half of his face with a cape.

**drive like a Cullen** To drive like a bat out of hell, similar to one of the Cullen family in *The Twilight* vampire books by Stephenie Meyer.

**Government Motors** A nickname for General Motors, which is now partly owned by the Federal government as a result of receiving bailout funds.

**El Stiffo** California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said he wasn't "El Stiffo" (meaning a colorless character) when some people said it was unbecoming of a governor to brandish a large knife in a video promoting the fundraising sale of state property.

**gaymarry, gay-marry** To marry someone of the same sex. Also used hyperbolically to mean "form an unconventional relationship," as in, "I love my new cell phone so much I want to gay-marry it."

**Great Recession** A reference to the current economic downturn in an echo of the Great Depression. Used at least a few times for every recession since 1980, but never with such vigor as now.

**green shoots** Signs of a country's economic recovery or of a company's financial turnaround. Widely used in the UK during the 1990's, but now spread to the rest of the English-speaking world.

**heinie** A pronunciation of H1N1, the swine flu virus.

**I'mma let you finish** Part of singer and rapper Kanye West's interruption of Taylor Swift's acceptance speech at the MTV Video Music Awards, and now the "All Your Base Belong to Us" meme of 2009.

**jeggings** Jean leggings.

**manceSSION** A recession that affects men more than women.

**meep** An exclamation used disruptively or nonsensically by young people. From Beaker of the *Muppet Show*.

**mini-Madoff** A person who perpetrates a Ponzi scheme of a size smaller than the one by Bernie Madoff.

**netbook** An inexpensive portable computer, usually smaller than a laptop but larger than a smartphone, intended mainly for use with the Internet.

**Octomom** Nadya Suleman, who gave birth to octuplets in January.

**orphan books** Volumes which are still in copyright but out of print and unavailable for sale, and whose copyright-holders cannot be found. Rose in 2007 but peaked this year with the fierce discussion over the Google Books settlement.

**public option** A government-run healthcare program, desired by some to be part of the country's healthcare reform.

**sexting** The sending of sexual messages or pictures by mobile telephone.

**social distancing** Staying away from other people so as not to catch, or to spread, the flu. Common since late 2005 but surging in 2009.

**swine flu party** A gathering held so people can be infected by a milder form of swine flu, in theory creating antibodies against more dangerous forms. Such a practice is universally discouraged by doctors.

**Tea Party** An organized gathering of anti-tax, anti-government, and/or anti-Obama protestors.

**teabagger** A derogatory name for attendees of Tea Parties, probably coined in allusion to a sexual practice.

**Tenther** A person who believes the Federal government is mostly illegal because it usurps rights which belong to the States, in violation of the 10th Amendment, which says "the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

**torture memos** Bush administration documents which secretly authorized the torture of suspected terrorists.

**Ununbium** The temporary name of a newly found element, *Uub* for short.

**vook** A digital book which includes some video in its text.

**Whiskey Tango Foxtrot** The alphabetical mnemonics for WTF, which in turn stands for *What The F\*\*\**. Used in military contexts as an expression of disbelief or surprise, as by General James L. Jones, the president's National Security Advisor.

**wise Latina woman** A term used by now Supreme Court justice Sonia Sotomayor to refer to herself, suggesting to some observers that she believed ethnicity and gender had a role in determining law.