

Nominations for the 2009 Word of the Year

to be voted on by the American Dialect Society

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

Nominated by **Ben Zimmer**, executive producer of the Visual Thesaurus,

<http://www.visualthesaurus.com/>

and member of the Executive Council of the American Dialect Society.

bzimmer@thinkmap.com

(212) 381-0550

balloon boy: media label for Falcon Heene, the six-year-old boy whose parents falsely claimed he had floated away in a home-made balloon.

beer summit: Obama's much-watched sit-down with Henry Louis Gates and James Crowley on July 30. Also: **beerestroika**.

birther: someone who questions whether Obama was born in the United States, modeled after *truther*, someone who doubts the official account of the 9/11 attacks. The term also carries a whiff of *flat-earther*. (See also *deather* below.)

Botax: nickname for a proposed tax on elective cosmetic surgery in the Senate healthcare reform bill, punning on *Botox*.

Climategate: controversy over hacked e-mails from the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit, used by doubters of man-made global warming as evidence of a *warmist* conspiracy (see below).

cramdown: involuntary imposition by a court of a reorganization plan over the objection of creditors.

death panel: term introduced by Sarah Palin to decry a system where "bureaucrats can decide" whether patients are "worthy of health care." Left-leaning bloggers came to refer to believers in the "death panel" claim as **deathers**, a neologism modeled on *birthers* (see above).

fail: interjection and noun used for an egregious object of ridicule. Popularized on FAIL Blog and Twitter (via hashtags such as *CNNFail* and *AmazonFail*). Often in the form *epic fail* (as opposed to *epic win*).

freemium: business model for online content with some content free of charge and other content behind a pay wall.

furcation: a polite term for unpaid time off (combination of *furlough* and *vacation*).

H1N1: the official name for the influenza virus that has reached pandemic proportions. Though *swine flu* is still widely used, *H1N1* has become increasingly accepted, despite its unwieldy mix of letters and numbers.

hiking the Appalachian trail: alibi used by Gov. Mark Sanford to cover up his clandestine Argentina trip, which quickly became a jocular political euphemism for "mysterious disappearances as a result of illicit activities."

hopium: blend of *hope* and *opium*, used to mock the excessive optimism of Obama supporters. "Smoking the hopium" is the new version of "drinking the Kool-Aid."

hyperlocal: used to describe journalism that focuses on small communities, filling the void left by the failing newspaper industry.

hyperpalatable: term popularized by former FDA Commissioner David Kessler to describe food loaded with fat, sugar, and salt. Kessler blames the growth of hyperpalatable foods for the obesity epidemic.

meep: playful interjection that was banned by the principal of Danvers (Mass.) High School after students used it in school disruptively.

mini-Madoff: perpetrator of a Ponzi scheme or other financial scam on a scale smaller than Bernie Madoff (e.g., Allen Stanford or Arthur Nadel).

Obamacare: Obama's health care proposals, as described by his opponents -- modeled on *Hillarycare*, for the unsuccessful health care plan of 1993 spearheaded by then-First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Octomom: media nickname for Nadya Suleman, mother of octuplets. First used by Air America's Ron Kuby.

porkulus: epithet used by conservative opponents of Obama's stimulus package (*pork* + *stimulus*).

public option: cornerstone of Democratic health care proposals, advancing the creation of a government program that would compete with private health insurers (with "opt-in," "opt-out," and "triggered" provisions under discussion).

Salahi, v. to gate-crash an official event, like the Salahis at Obama's state dinner (in the controversy known as *Crashergate* or *Gatecrashergate*). Used on Politico.com: "The invite-only party is Dec. 16. Have fun trying to Salahi your way in."

sext, v.: to transmit sexually explicit text messages and photos via cellphone.

shovel-ready: used to describe infrastructure projects that are ready to go when stimulus money is available (won the Most Likely to Succeed category in the American Dialect Society's Word of the Year voting for 2008).

smart power: foreign policy advocated by Hillary Clinton in her Secretary of State confirmation hearing, using "the full range of tools at our disposal -- diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural."

Twitterverse: the universe of Twitter users (aka *tweeps* or *tweeple*).

un-: all-purpose prefix for undoing actions on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, as in *unfriend*, *unfollow*, and *unfavorite*. As a reversative prefix, it is proving more popular than *de-*.

vook: blend of *video* + *book*, an e-book that combines text with video elements.

warmist: term used by skeptics of man-made global warming to describe climate scientists and others that they see as propagating a "warmist conspiracy" (as in *Climategate* above). Also: **warm-monger**.

wee-weed up: Obama's description of his agitated opponents: "There is something about August going into September where everybody in Washington gets all wee-weed up."

wise Latina: self-description of Judge Sonia Sotomayor that became a bone of contention in her Supreme Court confirmation hearings.

zombie bank: a bank that should have gone bust, kept alive by government guarantees.