

LSSU unfriends words, phrases in 35th annual List of Banished Words

January 1st, 2010

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. -- Word "czars" at Lake Superior State University "unfriended" 15 words and phrases and declared them "shovel-ready" for inclusion on the university's 35th annual List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-use, Over-use and General Uselessness.

"The list this year is a 'teachable moment' conducted free of 'tweets,'" said a Word Banishment spokesman who was "chillaxin'" for the holidays. "'In these economic times', purging our language of 'toxic assets' is a 'stimulus' effort that's 'too big to fail.'"

Former LSSU Public Relations Director Bill Rabe and friends created "word banishment" in 1975 at a New Year's Eve party and released the first list on New Year's Day. Since then, LSSU has received tens of thousands of nominations for the list, which includes words and phrases from marketing, media, education, technology and more.

For the 2010 list, read on:

SHOVEL-READY

"Apparently, the generally accepted definition of this phrase is to imply that a project has been completely designed and all that is left to do is to implement it...however, when something dies, it, too, is shovel-ready for burial and so I get confused about the meaning. I would suggest that we just say the project is ready to implement." – Jerry Redington, Keosauqua, Iowa.

"A relatively new term already overused by media and politicians. Bury this term, please." – Pat Batcheller, Southgate, Mich.

"Do I really need a reason? Well, if so how about this: I just saw it in tandem with 'cyber-ready' and nearly choked on my coffee. It's starting the '-ready' jargon. Makes me 'vacation-ready.'" – Karen Hill, Ann Arbor, Mich.

"Stick a shovel in it. It's done." – Joe Grimm, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

IN THESE ECONOMIC TIMES....

Nominations concerning the economy started rolling in as the 2009 list was being put together last year, i.e. "bailout." They kept coming this year, in these trouble economic times. "South Park" warned us about what would happen if we angered The Economy.

"Overused and redundant. Aren't ALL times 'these economic times'?" -- Barb Stutesman, Three Rivers, Mich.

"In this economy, we can't afford to be wasteful...In this economy, we all need some security...In this economy, frogs could start falling from the sky...In this economy, blah blah blah... Overused for everything from trying to market products as inexpensive to simply explaining any and all behavior during the recession." – Mark, Milwaukee, Wisc.

"When someone prefaces a statement with 'in this economic climate,' its starts to sound like a sales pitch, or just an excuse on which to blame every problem. And if a letter or e-mail message from your employer starts with this phrase, usually it means you're not getting a raise this year." – Dominic, Seattle, Wash.

STIMULUS

"Everything in the news is about the stimulus packages...it is no longer a grant, it's stimulus money, stimulus checks, etc. I think it is just being over-used." Teri Heikkila, Rudyard, Mich.

"Overused by companies to advertise a promotion." – David Willis, Houston, Tex.

"What next, can I go down to the local bar and down a few drinks and call it a stimulus package?" – Richard Brown, Portland, Ore.

TOXIC ASSETS

We think we're going to be sick.

"Whatever happened to simply 'bad stocks,' 'debts,' or 'loans'?" -- Monty Heidenreich, Homewood, Ill.

"What a wretched term!" Lee Freedman, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

TOO BIG TO FAIL

"Just for the record, nothing's too big to fail unless the government lets it." Claire Shefchik, Brooklyn, NY.

"Does such a thing exist? We'll never know if a company is too big to fail, unless somehow it does fail, and then it will no longer be too big to fail. Make it stop!" – Holli, Raleigh, NC.

TRANSPARENT/TRANSPARENCY

"I can see clearly that this is the new buzzword for the year." -- Joann Eschenburg, Clinton Twp., Mich.

"In the lexicon of the political arena, this word is supposed to mean obvious or easily understood. In reality, political transparency is more invisible than obvious!" -- Deb Larson, Bellaire, Mich.

"I just don't see it." – Joe Grimm, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

CZAR

Long used by the media as a metaphor for positions of high authority, including "baseball czar" Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, appointed by team owners as commissioner-for-life in 1919. U.S. president Woodrow Wilson had an "industry czar" during World War I. Lesser-known "czar" roles in government during the last 100 years include: censorship, housing and oil czars in 1941; rubber czar in 1942; patronage czar (1945); clean-up (1952); missile (1954); inflation (1971); e-commerce (1998); bioethics, faith-based and reading czars (2001); bird flu (2004); democracy (2005); abstinence and birth control czars (2006); and weatherization czar (2008).

George W. Bush appointed 47 people to 35 "czar" jobs; Pres. Obama, eight appointments to 38 positions.

"First it was a 'drug czar' [banished in 1990]. This year gave us a 'car czar.' What's next? A 'banished words czar'?" -- Michael F. Raczko, Swanton, Ohio.

"We have appointed a czar of such-and-such; clearly that's better than a 'leader,' 'coordinator' or 'director!' -- Derek Lawrence, Thunder Bay, Ont.

"The president has been handing these "czar" positions out like party favors." – Scott Lassiter, Houston, Tex.

TWEET

And all of its variations...tweetaholic, retweet, twitterhea, twitterature, twittersphere...

"People tweet and retweet and I just heard the word 'tweet' so many times it lost all meaning." – Ricardo, Merida, Yucatan, Mexico.

Mikhail Swift of Hillman, Mich. says the tweeting is "pointless...yet has somehow managed to take the nation by storm. I'm tired of hearing about celebrity X's new tweet, and how great of a tweeter he or she is."

"I don't know a single non-celebrity who actually uses it," says Alex Thompson of Sault St. Marie, Mich.

Jay Brazier of Williamston, Mich. says she supposes that tweeters might be "twits."

APP

"Must we be subject to yet another abbreviation? Why does the English language have to fit on a two-inch screen? I hate the sound of it. I think I'll listen to a symphony on the radio." -- Edward R. Bolt, Grand Rapids, Mich.

"Is there an 'app' for making this annoying word go away? Why can't we just call them 'programs' again?" -- Kuahmel Allah, Los Angeles, Calif.

SEXTING

Sending sexually explicit pictures and text messages through the cell phone.

"Any dangerous new trend that also happens to have a clever mash-up of words, involves teens, and gets television talk show hosts interested must be banished." -- Ishmael Daro, Saskatoon, Sask., Canada.

FRIEND AS A VERB

Came into popularity through social networking websites. You add someone to your network by "friending" them, or remove them by "unfriending" them.

"I'm certainly as much of a Facebook addict as the next person, but I'm getting a little weary of 'friending' people and being 'friended' by them. My daughter talks of 'sending friend requests,' which doesn't rankle me as much, so maybe we should all take her lead." -- John Wetterholt, Crystal Lake, Ill.

"'Befriend' is much more pleasant to the human ear and a perfectly useful word in the dictionary." -- Kevin K., Morris, Okla.

TEACHABLE MOMENT

What might otherwise be known as 'a lesson.'

"It's a condescending substitute for 'opportunity to make a point,'" says Eric Rosenquist of College Station, Tex.

"If everything's a 'teachable moment,' we should all have teaching credentials, including the guy at the bar who likes to fight after one shot too many." -- Kuahmel Allah, Los Angeles, Calif.

"This phrase is used to describe everything from potty-training to politics. It's time to vote it out!" -- Jodi, Youngstown, Ohio.

BROMANCE

"Have we really reached the point where being friends has to be described in a pseudo-romantic context? Just stop it already!" -- Greg Zagorski, Washington, D.C.

"I am sick of combined words the media creates to make them sound catchier. Frenemies? Bromances? Blogorrhea? I'm going to scream!" -- Kaylynn, Alberta, Canada.

CHILLAXIN'

Nominated for several years. We couldn't chill about it anymore.

"Heard everywhere from MTV to ESPN to CNN. A bothersome term that seeks to combine chillin' with relaxin' makes me want to be 'axin' this word." -- Tammy, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

"A made-up word used by annoying Gen-Yers." -- Chris Jensen, Fond du Lac, Wisc.

"Horrible overuse, even in face-to-face conversation... It should receive bonus points for its ability to exhort the opposite reaction from the receiver." -- Bret Bledsoe, Cincinnati, Ohio.

OBAMA-prefix or roots?

The LSSU Word Banishment Committee held out hope that folks would want to Obama-ban Obama-structions, but were surprised that no one Obama-nominated any, such as these compiled by the Oxford Dictionary in 2009: Obamanomics, Obamanation, Obamafication, Obamacare, Obamalicious, Obamaland....We say Obamanough already.