

CAUTION: Fiscal Cliff ahead - LSSU issues 38th annual List of Banished Words

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SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. – While the U.S. Congress has been kicking the can down the road and inching closer to the fiscal cliff, the word gurus at Lake Superior State University have doubled-down on their passion for the language and have released their 38th annual List of Words to be Banished from the Queen's English for Misuse, Overuse and General Uselessness.

The list, compiled from nominations sent to LSSU throughout the year, is released each year on New Year's Eve. It dates back to Dec. 31, 1975, when former LSSU Public Relations Director Bill Rabe (RAY-bee) and some colleagues cooked up the whimsical idea to banish overused words and phrases from the language. They issued the first list on New Year's Day 1976. Much to the delight of word enthusiasts everywhere, the list has stayed the course into a fourth decade.

Through the years, LSSU has received tens of thousands of nominations for the list, which now includes more than 800 entries.

This year's list is culled from nominations received mostly through the university's website, www.lssu.edu/banished. Word-watchers target pet peeves from everyday speech, as well as from the news, fields of education, technology, advertising, politics and more. A committee makes a final cut in late December.

So, let's see what's trending. Grab your favorite superfood (boneless wings) as the list creators at LSSU reveal (spoiler alert!) their bucket list of misused, overused and generally useless words and phrases. YOLO!

FISCAL CLIFF

As one might expect, this phrase received the most nominations this year. If Congress acts to keep the country from tumbling over the cliff, LSSU believes this banishment should get some of the credit.

"You can't turn on the news without hearing this. I'm equally worried about the River of Debt and Mountain of Despair." -- Christopher Loiselle, Midland, Mich.

"(We've) lost sight of the metaphor and started to think it's a real place, like with the headline, 'Obama, Boehner meeting on fiscal cliff'." -- Barry Cochran, Portland, Ore.

"Tends to be used however the speaker wishes to use it, as in falling off the fiscal cliff, climbing the fiscal cliff, challenged by the fiscal cliff, etc. Just once, I would like to hear it referred to as a financial crisis." -- Barbara CLIFF, Johnstown, Penn.

"Continually referred to as 'the so-called fiscal cliff,' followed by a definition. How many times do we need to hear 'fiscal cliff,' let alone its definition? Please let this phrase fall off of a real cliff!" -- Randal Baker, Seabeck, Wash.

"Fiscal cliff, fiscal update, fiscal austerity...whatever happened to 'economic' updates? Fiscal has to go." -- Dawn Farrell-Taylor, Ont.

"Makes me want to throw someone over a real cliff," -- Donna, Johnstown, NY

"If only those who utter these words would take a giant leap off of it." -- Joann Eschenburg, Clinton Twp., Mich.

KICK THE CAN DOWN THE ROAD

"Usually used in politics, this typically means that someone or some group is neglecting its responsibilities. This was seized upon during the current administration and is used as a cliché by all parties...Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Libertarians, Tories, Whigs, Socialists, Communists, Fashionistas..." -- Mike Cloran, Cincinnati, Ohio

"I'm surprised it wasn't on your 2012 list -- were you just kicking the, um, phrase down the road to 2013?" – T. Jones, Ann Arbor, Mich.

"I thought that perhaps you weren't ready to deal with it. You just kicked that can down the road." -- Rebecca Martz, Houston, Tex.

"I would definitely like to kick some cans of the human variety every time I hear politicians use this phrase to describe a circumstance that hasn't gone their way." -- Christine Tomassini, Livonia, Mich.

"Much the same as 'put on the back burner,' these two phrases still have heat and are still in the road. Kick this latest phrase down the road." -- Michael F. Raczko, Swanton, Ohio

"I can't turn on the TV any more without being informed that can-kicking has occurred. What's wrong with the word 'postpone'?" – Kathryn, West Chester, Ohio

DOUBLE DOWN

"This blackjack term is now used as a verb in place of 'repeat' or 'reaffirm' or 'reiterate.' Yet, it adds nothing. It's not even colorful. Hit me!" -- Allan Ryan, Boston, Mass.

"The next time I see or hear the phrase, I am going to double over." -- Tony Reed, Holland, Mich.

"Over-used within the last year or so in politics." -- John Gates, Cumberland, Maine

"Better nip this in the bud – it's already morphed into 'quadruple down.'" -- Marc Ponto, Milwaukee, Wisc.

JOB CREATORS/CREATION

"It implies supernatural powers -- such as the ability to change the weather or levitate. Most new jobs pay less than the lost jobs to ensure stratospheric CEO compensation and nice returns on investments. I respectfully propose a replacement term that is more accurate -- job depleters." -- Mark Dobias, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

"One of the most overplayed buzz terms of the 2012 presidential campaign. Apparently 'lowering unemployment' doesn't have the same impact." -- Dennis Ittner, Torrance, Calif.

Since jobs are only created by demand, consumers are the real job creators. -- Scott Biggerstaff, Redlands, Calif.

"It's been over-used and pigeon-holed into political arguments left, right, and center to the point that I don't believe it has any real meaning." -- Adam Myers, Cumming, Ga.

"To belong to this tax-proof club, you don't have to create a single job. All you need to do is be rich. In fact, many people who call themselves 'job creators' make their money by laying off people." -- S. Lieberman, Seattle, Wash.

"Uttered by every politician who wants to give big tax breaks to rich people and rich businesses..." -- Jack Kolars, North Mankato, Minn.

"If these guys are capitalists, as claimed, they are focused on reducing expenses and maximizing profit. Jobs are a large part of expenses. So, if anything at all, they minimize employment to maximize profits. Up is down, black is white. Job creators are really employment minimizers." -- Bob Fandrich, Fredericksburg, Va.

PASSION/PASSIONATE

"Diabetes is not just Big Pharma's business, it's their passion! This or that actor is passionate! about some issue somewhere. A DC lobbyist is passionate! about passing (or blocking) some proposed law. My passion! is simple: Banish this phony-baloney word." -- George Alexander, Studio City, Calif.

"As in 'that's my passion.' Please, let's hope you mean 'enthusiasm.' 'Passion' connotes 'unbridled,' unmediated by reason and sound judgment. Passion is the stuff of Ahab, Hitler, and chauvinists of every stripe, and terrorists." -- Michael T. Smith, Salem, Ore.

"Seared tuna will taste like dust swept from a station platform - until it's cooked passionately. Apparently, it's insufficient to do it ably, with skill, commitment or finesse. Passionate, begone!" -- Andrew Foyle, Bristol, UK

"My passion is (insert favorite snack food here). I'm passionate about how much I hate the words 'passion' and 'passionate.' Don't wait for next year's list! -- David Greaney, Bedford, NH

YOLO

"Stands for 'You Only Live Once' and used by wannabe Twitter philosophers who think they've uncovered a deep secret of life. Also used as an excuse to do really stupid things, such as streaking at a baseball game with YOLO printed on one's chest. I only live once, so I'd prefer to be able to do it without ever seeing YOLO again." -- Brendan Cotter, Grosse Pte. Park, Mich.

"Used by teens everywhere to describe an action that is risky or unconventional, yet acceptable because 'you only live once.' Who lives more than once?" -- P.P., Los Angeles, Calif.

"Just gives people, especially teens, a reason to do stupid things. I find it annoying and I'm pretty sure I'm not alone here." -- Daniel, Hickory, NC

"Only a real yoyo would use the term 'yolo.'" -- Sandra McGlew, White Lake, Mich.

SPOILER ALERT

"What was once a polite warning has turned into a declarative statement: I have just spoiled something for you. When news outlets print articles with headlines such as, 'Huge upset in men's Olympic swimming,' with a diminutive 'spoiler alert' on the link to the rest of the article, I think it's safe to say we've forgotten the meaning of the word 'alert.'" -- Afton, Portland, Ore.

"Used as an obnoxious way to show one has trivial information and is about to use it, no matter what." -- Joseph Joly, Fremont, Calif.

BUCKET LIST

"The expression makes me cringe every time I hear it -- and we've been hearing it for several years. I'm surprised it isn't already in your master list. Let's emphasize life and what we do during it. It's such a grim way of looking at 'what I want to do,' and often it is in selfish terms." -- Shea Hoffmitz, Hamilton, Ont.

"Getting this phrase on the Banished Word List is on my bucket list!" -- Frederick Fish, Georgia

TRENDING

"A trend is something temporary, thank goodness; however, it is not a verb, and I'm tired of news stations telling me what trite 'news' is 'trending.'" -- Kyle Melton, White Lake, Mich.

"I'm sick of chirpy entertainment commentators constantly informing us of what 'is trending right now.' I used to like a good trend until this." -- Nancy, Victoria, BC.

"Trending leaves me wondering 'in what direction?' It seems to mean 'increasing in attention received' or 'frequency in which it is referenced.'" -- John Hannon, Springfield, Va.

SUPERFOOD

"It's food. It's either healthful or it's not. There is no 'super' involved. -- Jason Hansen, Frederic, Mich.

BONELESS WINGS

"Can we just call them chicken (pieces)?" -- John McNamara, Lansing, Mich.

GURU

"Unless you're teaching transcendental meditation, Hinduism or Buddhism, please don't call yourself a guru just because you think you're an expert at something. It's silly and pretentious. Let other people call you that, if they must." -- Mitch Devine, Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.

A Word Banishment salute to John Prokop of Oakland, Calif., who sent us a list of nearly four dozen words, phrases and acronyms that “bug the heck” out of him. Most of those that he mentioned are on this list or have been on previous lists.