

# 'Going Green' Gets Most Attention on LSSU's Banished Word List This Year

Lake Superior State University "maverick" word-watchers, fresh from the holiday "staycation" but without an economic "bailout" even after a "desperate search," have issued their 34th annual List of Words to Be Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-use, Over-use, and General Uselessness.

This year's list may be more "green" than any of the previous lists and includes words and phrases that people from "Wall Street to Main Street" say they love "not so much" and wish to have erased from their "carbon footprint."

The list began December 31, 1975, when the university's former Public Relations Director Bill Rabe and his colleagues had an idea to banish overused words and phrases. Mr. Rabe distributed the resulting list on New Year's Day. In the following weeks, nominations for the next year's list came pouring into his office. The LSSU office still receives thousands of nominations every year from people who are interested in words and language.

This year's list comes from thousands of nominations received through the university's Web site. Nominations are accepted throughout the year. Word enthusiasts target pet peeves from everyday speech, as well as from the news, education, technology, advertising, politics, and sports. A committee makes a final cut to the list in late December. The 2009 list follows:

The environmental buzzwords "green" and "going green" received the most nominations.

**Green** – The ubiquitous "green" and all of its variables, such as "going green," "building green," "greening," "green technology," "green solutions," and more, drew the most attention from those who sent in nominations this year.

"This phrase makes me go green every time I hear it." – *Danielle Brunin, Lawrence, Kansas.*

"I'm all for being environmentally responsible, but this green needs to be nipped in the bud." – *Valerie Gilson, Gales Ferry, Connecticut.*

"Companies are less 'green' than ever, advertising the fact they are 'green.' Is anyone buying this nonsense?" – *Mark Etchason, Denver, Colorado.*

"If something is good for the environment, just say so. As Kermit would say, 'It isn't easy being green.'" – *Kevin Sherlock, Hiawatha, Iowa.*

"If I see one more corporation declare itself 'green,' I'm going to start burning tires in my backyard." – *Ed Hardiman, Bristow, Virginia.*

"This spawned 'green solutions,' 'green technology,' and the horrible

use of the word as a verb, as in, 'We really need to think about greening our office.'" – *Mike McDermott, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

**Carbon footprint or carbon offsetting** – "It is now considered fashionable for everyone, tree hugger or lumberjack alike, to pay money to questionable companies to 'offset' their own 'carbon footprint.' What a scam! Get rid of it immediately!" – *Ginger Hunt, London, England.*

Mike of Chicago says that when he hears the phrase carbon footprint: "I envision microscopic impressions on the surface of the earth where an atom of carbon forgot to wear its shoes."

Christy Loop of Woodbridge, Virginia, says that leaving a carbon footprint has become the new politically incorrect: "How can we not, in one way or another, affect our natural environment?"

Presidential election years are always ripe for language abuse. This year, the electorate grew weary of "mavericks" and "super delegates." As Michael W. Casby of Haslett said when he suggested banning all of the candidates' names, "Come on, it's been another too-long campaign season."

**Maverick** – "The constant repetition of this word for months before the U.S. election diluted whatever meaning it previously had. Even the comic offshoot 'mavericky' was terribly overused. A minimum five-year banishment of both words is suggested so they will not be available during the next federal election." – *Matthew Mattila, Green Bay, Wisconsin.*

"You know it's time to banish this word when even the Maverick family, who descended from the rancher who inspired the term, says it's being mis-used." – *Scott Urbanowski, Kentwood.*

"I'm a maverick, he's a maverick, wouldn't you like to be a maverick, too?" – *Michael Burke, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

**First Dude** – "Skateboard English is not an appropriate way to refer to the spouse of a high-ranking public official." – *Paul Ruschmann, Canton.*

Of course, the economy couldn't escape the list this year.

**Bailout** – "Use of emergency funds to remove toxic assets from banks' balance sheets is not a bailout. When your cousin calls you from jail in the middle of the night, he wants a bailout." – *Ben Green, State College, Pennsylvania.*

"Is it a loan? Is it a purchase of assets by the government? Is it a gift made by the taxpayers?" – *Dave Gill, Traverse City.*

"Now it seems as though every sector of the economy wants a bailout. Unfortunately, ordinary workers can't qualify." – *Tony, McLeansville, North Carolina.*

"Don't we love how Capitol Hill will bail out Wall Street, but not Main Street"?' – *Derrick Chamberlain, Midland.*

Speaking of Wall Street and Main Street...

**Wall Street/Main Street** – "When this little dyad first came into use at the start of the financial crisis, I thought it was a clever use

of parallelism. But it's simply over-used. No 'serious' discussion of the crisis can take place without some political figure lamenting the fact that the trouble on Wall Street is affecting 'folks' on Main Street." – *Charles Harrison, Aiken, South Carolina.*

"The recent and continuing financial failings are not limited to 'Wall Street,' nor should one paint business, consumers, and small investors as 'Main Street.' Topeka (where I work), and Lawrence (where I live), Kansas, have no

## Northern Michigan News Roundup

*The news in brief from communities around the U.P. and northern Michigan*

Compiled using information published in various community newspapers.

### City Manager Lists Top Issues in "a Dynamic Year" for Sault

The City of Sault Ste. Marie's designation as a Smart Zone by the State of Michigan was among the top 20 issues for that city in the past year, said City Manager Spencer Nebel, calling 2008 "a dynamic year" for Sault Ste. Marie.

The designation could bring the city and Eastern Upper Peninsula economic advantages, he said, as the state works to reposition itself for a "knowledge-based economy."

The acquisition of the Old Federal Building and the sale of the city's share of the City-County Building also ranked high on the annual list of top issues for the city. These actions cleared the way for a new City Hall on Portage Street, while freeing the city of its obligations at the current facility.

New construction in several places was mentioned on the city manager's top 20 list, including the Super Walmart project, \$6.6 million set aside for infrastructure for water, sewer, and new roads, and building permits issued exceeding \$23 million in 2008, evidence of community growth.

A pilot project with the State Department of Environmental Quality to develop an overall Wetlands Master Plan is hoped to clear the way for future construction in the city.

A plan to curtail skyrocketing health care costs, setting a local bidding preference policy, a blighted structure initiative, and the opening of city streets to snowmobile traffic this winter were also listed as top issues, as was a joint New Year's Eve celebration planned with Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

The potential sale of the I-500 property was also listed. The end result of that plan was that developer Philip Garforth was unable to put together financing for the proposal and the I-500 Snowmobile Race will stay at its current home, at least in the foreseeable future.

– *The Evening News*

### Northern Lower Michigan Reports: The Snow Just Keeps Coming

Snowfall totals are 20% to 30% ahead of this time last year at Rogers City in Presque Isle County, at 59 inches, nearly breaking a record set in 2000. The record for December snowfall there is 61.75 inches, set in 2000. A breakdown of monthly amounts was kept beginning with the 1987-88 season; previous to that, the totals only indicated snowfall for the entire season.

In Gaylord, which usually receives 160 to 170 inches of snow for the entire season, the count is already at 90 inches of snow for this winter.

The snow-making system tracked further downstate last winter, when Grand Rapids had more than the traditional snowbelts in northwest lower Michigan. This year, polar air has blasted into Michigan, creating lots of lake effect snow, which has combined with system snow.

– *Presque Isle County Advance*

### New Fire Truck Ordered for Sault Ste. Marie

A new custom-built pumper/rescue fire truck is slated to arrive in Sault Ste. Marie in the summer of 2009.

The new truck, costing nearly \$457,000, will be expected to last 25 to 30 years and is complete with extrication and forcible entry equipment.

The purchase is necessary to upgrade emergency response for the community, the fire chief reported. The old pumper, a 1985 Ford, delivers up to 700 gallons of water a minute, while the new truck will pump 2,000 gallons a minute to enhance fire suppression.

Money has been saved each year in preparation for the purchase, allowing the city to pay cash up front for the truck.

In addition to providing more water, it will also be the primary responder to traffic accidents, carrying the Jaws of Life, other hydraulic equipment, enhanced lighting capabilities, and emergency medical equipment.

– *The Evening News*

named 'Main Street.' How tiresome." – *Kent McAnally, Topeka, Kansas.*

"I am so tired of hearing about everything affecting 'Main Street.' I know that with the 'Wall Street' collapse, the comparison is convenient, but really, let's find another way to talk about everyman or the middle class, or even, heaven forbid, 'Joe the Plumber.'" – *Stacey, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

Internet and texting blues:

**Monkey** – "Especially on the Internet, many people seem to think they can make any boring name sound more attractive just by adding the word 'monkey' to it. Do a search to find the latest. It is no longer funny." – *Rogier Landman, Somerville, Massachusetts.*

<3 – Supposed to resemble a heart, or stand for the word "love." Used when sending those important text messages to loved ones.

"Just say the word instead of making me turn my head sideways and wondering what 'less than three' means." – *Andrea Estrada, Chicago.*

Overuse in news and entertainment:

**Icon or iconic** – Overused, especially among entertainers and in entertainment news, according to Robyn Yates of Dallas, who says

that "every actor, actress, and entertainment magazine show overuses this." One of the most-nominated words of the year.

"Everyone and everything cannot be 'iconic.' Can't we switch to 'legendary' or 'famous for'? In our entertainment-driven culture, it seems everyone in show business is 'iconic' for some reason or another." – *John Flood, Bray, Wicklow, Ireland.*

"It's becoming the new 'awesome' – overused to the point where everything from a fast-food restaurant chain to celebrities is 'iconic.'" – *Jodi Gill, New Berlin, Wisconsin.*

"Just because a writer recognizes something does not make it an icon (a visual symbol or representation which inspires worship or veneration) or iconic. It just means that the writer has seen it before." – *Brian Murphy, Fairfield, Connecticut.*

**Game changer** – "It's come over for this cliché, which gets overused in the news media, political arenas, and in business." – *Cynthia, Mt. Pleasant.*

**Staycation** – "Occurrences of this word are going up with gas prices. 'Vacation' does not mean 'travel,' nor does travel always involve vacation. Let's send this

Turn to page 11: **Words**

## Michigan Politics

By  
George Weeks



### Population Loss, Redistricting Loom Large for Michigan

Michigan, long reeling from huge job losses and other economic grief, now faces more loss of clout on Capitol Hill, and possibly lower levels of federal funds, because of accelerating population loss.

Census Bureau estimates released last week show Michigan losing more people last year – 46,368, or 5% of population – than any other state, continuing a three-year slump. Rhode Island was the only other state to lose population (2,348).

Michigan's plight is an extension of population changes that have shifted political power from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West.

As recently as 1982, Michigan had 19 seats in the U.S. House. Representative Bob Davis (R-Gaylord), formerly of St. Ignace, represented all 15 Upper Peninsula counties and seven atop the northern lower.

Now, as the result of reapportionment after 2000 and previous Census counts pegging Michigan and other Rust Belt states with lagging population growth, Michigan has 15 House seats.

First District Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee) represents the U.P. and 16 counties below the bridge, stretching down the east side all the way to northern Bay County.

Geographically, it's the second-largest district east of the Mississippi after Maine's 2nd District, which is larger than New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts combined.

Based on last week's estimates, Michigan is among eight states, including neighboring Ohio, which would lose one seat after the 2010 Census. The 32-member Texas delegation would gain three seats, and five other states each would gain one.

Michigan with 14 House seats – a stunning loss of five in about a quarter century – would not necessarily dilute Up North's voice in the delegation. It all depends on how the Legislature draws the districts.

A Republican-ruled Legislature drew the current districts, fashioning Stupak's with a Republican edge on paper, although the mapmakers privately and correctly noted that he, as a popular incumbent, would be tough to dislodge. He has been.

Incumbent Republican Representative Pete Hoekstra of Holland in the 2nd District and Dave Camp of Midland in the 4th District ended up with safe districts that included some northern counties previously represented by Stupak.

In short, northern Michigan, even though the state had lost a congressional seat, ended up with three congressmen to represent its residents and tout Great Lakes and other northern issues. Republicans Camp and Hoekstra joined Stupak in doing that on fighting for Coast Guard, harbor, and other funding.

How Michigan's dwindling congressional pie is next sliced largely depends on the shape of Lansing's power blocs after the 2010 Census. It's likely that Democrats will continue current House control, and Republicans theirs in the Senate.

A reapportionment dispute could go to the Michigan Supreme Court, which had a 5-2 Republican edge until the 2008 election that reduced it to 4-3. Democratic Justice Robert P. Young Jr., is up in 2010, as is Republican Justice Betty Weaver, critic of Young and her three other Republican colleagues – the Engler Four.

Although the Executive Branch is not as directly involved in reapportionment, a strong leader, such as 1991-2003 Republican Governor John Engler, can influence the outcome, as he did the last time around.

The replacement of term-limited Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm will be decided the same year as the 2010 Census.

A leading 2010 Democratic prospect is Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, who during 20 years in the Legislature, was deeply immersed in reapportionment battles.

Also among 2010 gubernatorial prospects are the two top Republican officeholders in the Executive Branch, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, a former Kent County clerk who among her other responsibilities is Michigan's chief election officer, and Attorney General Mike Cox.

Cox is fresh off a victory in his coalition battle started in 2007 to block efforts in the lame duck legislative session of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, a powerful lobby force in Lansing, to enact its version of insurance reform. The Blues battles, and ads, resume in 2009.

As for who will remap congressional districts for the next decade, zesty battles loom in 2010.

*George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.*

## The St. Ignace News

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