NAME THAT DRUG!

What does the word "Prozac" say to you? Or "Viagra"? Yes, they're brand names for widely used prescription drugs, but how did these meds get those names?

Believe it or not, there is a naming industry—consulting firms that specialize in the art, science, and voodoo of coming up with monikers that subliminally make consumers feel positive about drugs.

Sound hokey? You be the judge. The consultants (who get paid up to $500,000 per drug name) insist that letters are imbued with psychological meaning. P, T, and K, they claim, convey effectiveness. Z is speed, X is scientific, and L is calming.

The honcho of Namebase, the branding firm that worked with Eli Lilly to name the antidepressant Prozac, loves the impact of just the first syllable. "Pro," he explained to an AP reporter, "makes the speaker pucker up and push out a burst of air, which grabs attention and implies effectiveness."

Hmmm. Would that burst of positiveness also apply to "profane," "profligate," or "promiscuous"?

How about "Viagra"? Anthony Shore, who is "global director of naming" for another branding firm, says that "Viagra" is all about power, causing gullible consumers to associate the product with Niagara Falls.

The word that comes to mind when I hear this is "claptrap"—conveying artifice, humbuggery, and a deep sense of being had.

RIGHT-TO-KNOW

If you live near any kind of factory, chemical plant, or similar facility, you might have noticed curious smells emanating from those places. What is it?

Well, you and I have a legal right to know in detail what kind and how much toxic stuff these places are releasing into our air, water, and soil. The national Right-To-Know Program, passed in 1984, provides that data on air-borne toxins be made public.

It was not Congress—and certainly not the polluting corporations—that created this essential public tool. Rather, the sparkplug was a guy named Tony Mazzocchi, a wiry, savvy, spirited labor leader (one of the best ever) who coined the phrase, "right-to-know." Around 1970, Tony was getting hundreds of complaints from chemical workers about plants that were shrouded in what the corporate bosses dismissively called "dust."

Mazzocchi barnstormed across America, helping grassroots coalitions pass dozens of local right-to-know laws and then the federal legislation.

However, in 2001, George W happened, and he's been doing his damnedest to undo Tony's work. At the behest of corporate executives who hate the pesky public, W's regulators have exempted some 3,500 toxic spewers from the Right-To-Know law.

Congress or a new president must reverse W's monkeywrenching, and if they need inspiration they should read Les Leopold's new book, *The Man Who Loved Labor and Hated Work: The Life and Times of Tony Mazzocchi* (Chelsea Publishing, Nov. 2007).

THE DIMMING STAR OF STARBUCKS

About a year ago, a stinging message was delivered to the corporate honchos of Starbucks, the mega-chain of costly coffees.

The writer decried the "commoditization of the Starbucks experience," bemoaning the fact that outlets "no longer have the soul of the past and [instead] reflect a chain of stores vs. the warm feeling of a neighborhood store." He's right, of course. You go into a Starbucks these days, and the barista who used to make your cup is operating an automatic push-button coffee machine.

The interesting thing about the guy who wrote to the honchos is that he is none other than Howard Schultz, the founder and former CEO of Starbucks! Shortly after delivering his critique, Schultz returned to the helm, promising to restore the "customer experience."

It's not going well. He's gotten rid of the warmed-up egg sandwiches, whose smell overpowered the heady aroma of coffee, but the push-button espresso and inadequately trained staff remain. In the year since Schultz's return, Starbucks' stock price has fallen 40 percent as customers have continued to return to locally owned coffee houses.

What irony that Starbucks pays for the image of the cool, independent hangouts that Schultz spent the last 20 years trying to drive out of business.

The Hightower LOWDOWN

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The Hightower LOWDOWN

Edited by Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer ◆ Vol.10 No.4 ◆ April 2008

"I hope that when it's all said and done, people see me as a strategic thinker, and that I'm able to stay focused on a strategy that will leave behind peace and hope."
— GEORGE W. BUSH, Tampa, Florida, February 17, 2006

What 8 years of BushCheney have done to our economy

HARRY TRUMAN SAID, "No man should be allowed to be president who doesn't understand hogs." That's never been more true than it will be for the man or woman who walks into the White House on January 20, 2009.

If you've ever entered an enclosed, industrialized hog facility where hundreds of fattening porcines live out their short lives, you know that the smell of pig excrement completely redefines "stink." This stench will knock you to your knees, sear your lungs and brain, and make you scream for mercy. For nearly eight years, the White House has been a confined hog pen for corporate porkers, right-wing ideologues, imperialists, autocrats, and other swinish mess-makers. America's next president must not only set a new direction but will also have to clean up the mess and eradicate the stink left by the Bushites.

To help presidential contenders, congressional candidates and the rest of us get perspective on the odiferous legacy of the Bush-Cheney regime, the *Lowdown* is presenting a two-part factual accounting of the administration's achievements since 2001. This issue will feature Bush's domestic performance, and the May issue will highlight his international agenda. Hold your nose—and get out your scrubbers.

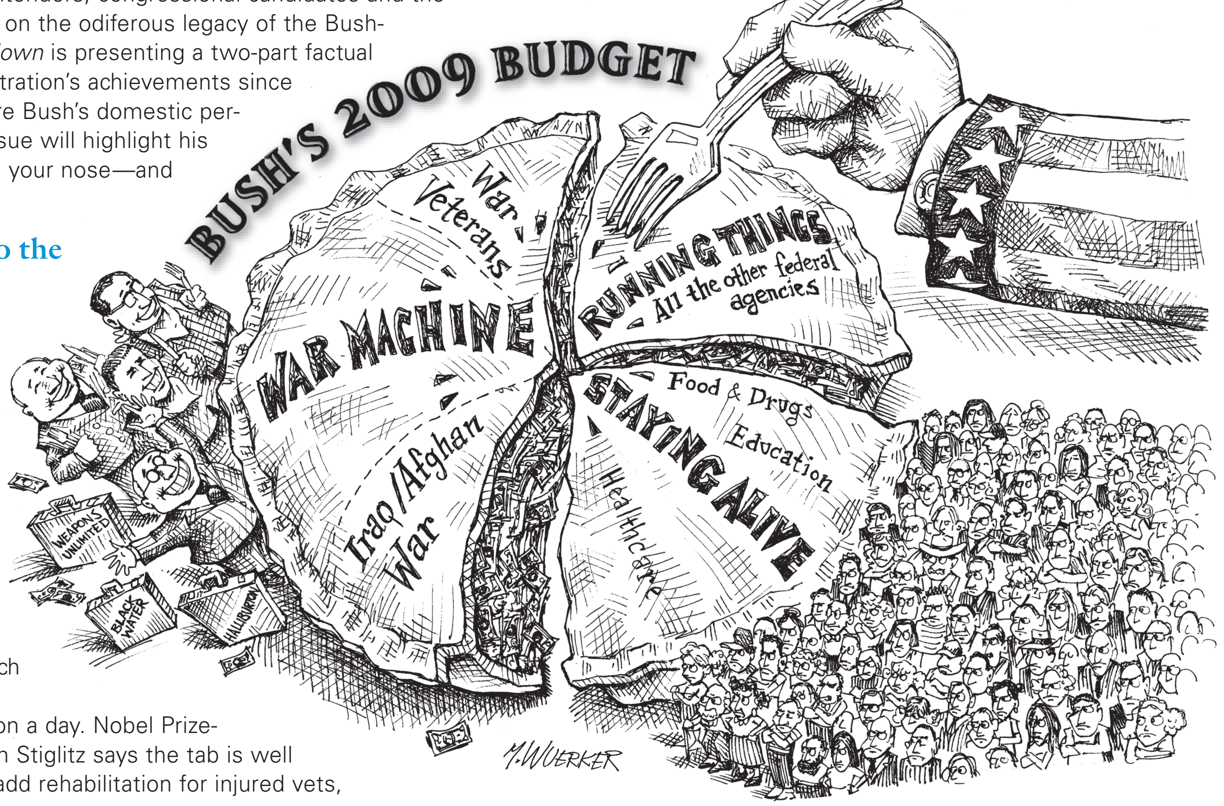
The 3 biggest hits to the economy

1 **BUSH'S TAX CUTS** for the rich have reduced annual tax revenue available for public needs by $300 billion each year.

2 **BUSHCHENEY'S OCCUPATION** of Afghanistan and Iraq has cost $700 billion, according to the Congressional Research Service.

That's about $400 million a day. Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz says the tab is well over $2 trillion when you add rehabilitation for injured vets, replacement of military hardware, and the value of things we could have produced (but didn't) with that money over the past seven years.

3 **BUSHITES HAVE FINISHED OFF** the deregulation of banking that began in earnest during Bill Clinton's presidency. This ideological madness has caused the collapse of investment funds, banks, and the stock value of corporations that depend on them (which is to say most of Wall Street and much of the financial world), as well as a steep decline in the value of most homes in America and a sharp rise in the cost of living in them.



BUSH-LEAGUE MANAGEMENT OF OUR ECONOMY

	2001 THEN	2008 NOW
U.S. national debt ** Of which China holds IOUs worth $390 billion*	$5.7 trillion	$9.2 trillion*
Real GDP growth over prior 8 years	4.09%	2.65%
U.S. trade deficit per year	$380 billion	$759 billion
Cost of imported consumer goods	$1,147 billion	$1,954 billion
Value of consumer goods imported from China *(in 2007 China became #1 source of U.S. imported consumer goods)*	$102.3 billion	$322 billion
Cost of one euro	$1.01	$1.45
Cost of one ounce of gold	$319	$892
U.S. budget surplus/deficit	+ $236 billion	- $354 billion

WHAT 8 YEARS OF BUSH, CHENEY AND A COMPLIANT CONGRESS HAVE DONE TO OUR ECONOMY

Fighting it out at the tippy top:

THE TOP 1% include many more Wall Street financiers than CEOs. The **25 highest-paid** hedge-fund managers are earning more than the CEOs of the **largest 500 companies combined**. Several of these fund managers are taking home more than **a billion dollars** a year. *And guess what?* **Democratic party campaigns get twice** as much in contributions from hedge-fund types as do Republicans!

ENERGY
BUSHCHENEY: THE FOSSIL FOOLS

	2001 THEN	2008 NOW
Average price of a gallon of home-heating oil	$1.40	$3.39
Average price of a gallon of gas	$1.47	$3.14
Portion of our liquid fuels imported	52.75%	60.38%
ExxonMobil profits	$7.9 billion	$36.1 billion

Getting by in America

BUSH SAYS: "In the long run, Americans can be confident about our economic growth." *(State of the Union speech 2008)*

THE FACTS SAY: While the overall economy has grown, the wages of the average worker have not even kept up with inflation. Meanwhile, nearly five million more Americans have fallen into poverty since 2001.

HOW THE CORPORATIONS GET BY

	2001 THEN	2008 NOW
Corporate profits before tax	$719.2 billion	$1,769.5 billion
Corporate profits after tax	$503.8 billion	$1,351.9 billion*
Pharmaceutical company profits	$30 billion *(top 9)*	$80 billion *(top12)***

* ***Standard & Poor's*** 500 top corporations' profits more than doubled in the period 2001-2005 and reached 8.6% of Gross Domestic Product in 2006–the highest percentage of GDP on record.

**Drug-companies' profits continue to be around 18.5% of their sales income, versus 3.1%for other top-500 companies.

HOW THE RICH GET BY

	2001 THEN	2008 NOW
Net worth of the wealthiest 1%	$186 billion	$816 billion
Number of billionaires	186	415
Their combined wealth	$816 billion	$3.5 trillion
Average salary of top 500 corp CEOs in 2007 *In 2006, buyout mogul Henry Kravis paid himself $51,400…an hour.*		$15.2 million
Bush tax cuts to the top 1% 2001-2007		$546 billion

Defunding good government

WHILE MILITARY SPENDING has grown 7.5% since Bush took office, spending on almost all domestic discretionary programs has been cut. "Discretionary" means that Congress and the administration can decide, year by year, how much each program deserves. Under BushCheney, that means less of anything that serves the common good, like (in order of size) education, highways and other ground transportation, housing assistance, biomedical research, federal law enforcement, public-health services, regulation of air traffic, and space flight.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has tracked federal spending over the course of BushCheney's reign of error and concludes that almost all of these programs have shrunk when measured in relation to the growth of the economy as a whole. The Center reports that outlays to mandated federal programs—Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid—have declined 2.4%, while discretionary programs have been cut by 3.7%.

Education

BUSH SAYS: "a new $300 million program called Pell Grants for Kids [will] help liberate poor children trapped in failing public schools."

Bush's Pell Grants for Kids is a plan to shift government funding from public schools to private schools, mostly Christian schools. THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES) says: the average adjusted school mean for Conservative Christian schools "in reading was not significantly different from that of public schools. In mathematics, the average adjusted school mean for Conservative Christian schools was significantly lower than that of public schools."

HOW THE REST OF US GET BY

	2001 THEN	2008 NOW
EARNING:		
Median pre-tax household income	$49,158	$48,201
◆ decrease for African American households under Bush		$2,766
◆ decrease for Asian American households		$1,381
◆ decrease for Hispanic households		$1,043
◆ decrease for white households		$745
WORKING:		
Salary of full-time minimum-wage earner in 2007		$12,168
Increase in productivity of American workers under Bush		18%
Increase in real earnings of American workers under Bush		9%
Total # manufacturing jobs	17.3 million	14.2 million
Avg new jobs per year in prior 8 years	1.76 million	369,000
National unemployment rate	3.5%	5%
Number unemployed Americans	5.6 million	7.7 million
Number including discouraged or underemployed	9.9 million	13.5 million
LIVING:		
Americans living in poverty	31.6 million	36.5 million
Americans going hungry according to the USDA	31 million	38.2 million
Cost of a gallon of milk	$3	$3.79
Cost of a loaf of bread	$.98	$1.32
Rent of 2-bedroom home in Los Angeles *(per month)*	$1,658	$2,229
Rent of 1-bedroom home in Boston *(per month)*	$1,453	$2,000
Total consumer credit debt	$7.65 trillion	$12.8 trillion
Personal savings rate	+2.3%	-0.5%
HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS:		
Increase in number of home foreclosures from 2006		68%
Households currently at high risk of foreclosure		2 million
Households paying more than half their income for housing		13 million
Households unable to afford even the lowest-priced home rentals in the U.S.		2.8 million

Bush's 2009 budget...

...deals with the housing crisis by proposing to:

- **Cut the number of housing vouchers** that help very poor people pay their rent **by 100,000**.
- **Cut the budget for housing** for poor elderly people **by 27%**.
- **Cut the budget for housing** for people with disabilities **by 32%**.
- **Cut the fund** for repair and maintenance of public housing **by 17%** and eliminate funding to repair public housing damaged by natural disasters.
- **Cut the lead-hazard** reduction funds **by 20%**.
- **Cut the block grants** to cities and states for housing and community-development programs **by 18%**.
- **Cut low-income** energy assistance **by 20%**.

Veterans' healthcare

BUSH SAYS: "We have increased funding for veterans by more than 95 percent." *(State of the Union speech 2008)*

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH SAYS: In 2004 nearly 1.8 million veterans were uninsured and unable to get care in veterans' facilities. An additional 3.8 million members of their households were also uninsured and ineligible for VA care. No new study has been done since 2004 but things have only gotten worse.

Our health vs the rest of the world

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ranks U.S. health care 37th in the world, behind France (1), Singapore (6), Japan (10), United Kingdom (18), Colombia (22), and Costa Rica (36).

Of six nations studied by the New York-based Commonwealth Fund—Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States—the U.S. ranks last.

HEALTHCARE
COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM

	2001 THEN	2008 NOW
Americans without health insurance	38.4 million	46.9 million
Children without health insurance		8.7 million
◆ African American households uninsured		20.5%
◆ Asian American households uninsured		15.5%
◆ Hispanic households uninsured		34.1%
◆ White households uninsured		10.8%
Cost of family health insurance per year	$6,230	$12,106
Cost of family health insurance per month	$519	$1,009
FOOD SAFETY:		
Number of shipments of agricultural imports	4.5 million	9 million
Number of U.S. FDA inspectors of imports	3,500	3,488
Percentage of imported food inspected by FDA		1.3%

EDUCATION
MORE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

	2001 THEN	2008 NOW
Average cost per year at a public four-year college	$8,400	$13,000
Average cost per year at a private four-year college	$22,000	$29,000
Average debt shouldered by college graduates	$12,000	$21,000
Gap between the maximum federal Pell Grant and the cost of a 4-year degree in a public school	$5,282	$8,746

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* Most figures are derived from U.S. government statistics. An excellent fact-and-figure overview is at ***ourfuture.org*** (Campaign for America's Future). For more sources, go to ***www.hightowerlowdown.org.***

New Orleans

BUSH SAYS: "We reaffirm our pledge to help them build stronger and better than before." *(State of the Union speech 2008)*

THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU SAYS: "Almost 40% of the people displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina [lived] below the poverty line last year," and "nearly a third of those who fled the hurricane could not find jobs last year, and thousands more [had given up] trying."