In the February 1976 Kickshaws, Ralph Beaman wondered about the possibility of Websterian words made up from the two-letter postal abbreviations for the 50 states. For example, ORDEAL is composed of OR (Oregon), DE (Delaware), and AL (Alabama). This article attempts to list all the stately words in Webster’s Pocket Dictionary, extending the results to Webster’s Second and Third Editions for longer examples.

For the record, the abbreviations are listed below. I have omitted the non-states CZ, DC, GU, PR and VI as well as the Canadian provinces which appear on the standard list of postal abbreviations; these add a few more words to the collection. Note that Nebraska was formerly NB but is now NE.

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AK CO HI KS ME MT NJ OK SD VT
AL CT IA KY MI NC NM OR TN WA
AR DE ID LA MN ND NV PA TX WI
AZ FL IL MA MO NE NY RI UT WV
CA GA IN MD MS NH OH SC VA WY
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Actually, there are two distinct varieties of stately words -- ones without overlap, as illustrated above, and ones with overlap, such as MARINE, composed of MA (Massachusetts), AR (Arkansas), RI (Rhode Island), IN (Indiana) and NE (Nebraska). Overlapping stately words with an even number of letters are, of course, stately words as well. Both varieties are listed in the table below, with non-overlapping ones after the virgule:

2 id, in, ma, me, ok, or, pa
3 car, hid, mar, mid, mil, pal, par, rid, war
4 aria, arid, flak, gala, hide, hind, Inca, mind, mine, rial, ride, rind, scar, wide, wind, wine / akin, (inter) alia, alma (mater), alms, arks, arms, came, cans, cane, coal, coco, code, coil, coin, cola, coma, come, cone, cony, cook, deal, dear, deny, dewy, gain, game, inks, inky, laid, lain, lama, lame, land, lane, lava, made, maid, mail, main, mama, mane, many, meal, (chow) mein, memo, mend, mica, mime, mode, moil, moor, near, ohms, oral, pact, paid, pail, pain, pane, papa, rime, rims, vade (mecum), vail, vain, vane, wade, wail, wain, wand, pane
If one searches Webster’s Second and Third Editions for additional examples eight letters or longer, the following turn up:

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8 Coriaria, Incaria, scalaria / alcamine, armorial, Arctalia, camiscia, Cocamama, cocamine, cocorico, colamine, Comiakin, concilia, Condalia, conyrine, cookmaid, descral, Floralia, gaincome, Galactia, galactin, galagala, Ganymede, hideland, hiwi hiwi, idrilalin, lavalava, lavandin, mahimahi, malacoid, malacone, Mandinga, mandorla, manerial, Maricopa, melamine, mescaline, milan d’or, mocomoco, morindin, moschine, palapala, Riksmaal, riparial, scillain, scincoid, varicoid, wind cone, Wineland

10 / alkylamine, almond meal, calamondin, cascarilla, Nectarinia

12 / cacogalactia

One eight-letter example very much in the news is not found in Webster: CONCORDE, the Anglo-French supersonic airplane. Many stately words are proper names: (Costa) RICA, (Puerto) RICO, WACO, RIGA, DENMARK’S (the possessive form of Denmark). If a family with the surname of MARIN has a stately daughter, what better name for her than MARIA?

Several statename abbreviations -- AZ, UT, MD, MN, MT, NH, NJ, NV, SD, TN, TX, VT, and WV -- have not been used. The first two of these are found in Webster’s Second: (kala) AZAR and UTIA. Can readers locate any stately words for the others?

I am indebted to Seth Landon of Brooklyn, N. Y. for adding several words to the Pocket Webster list.