STATE NAME OVERLAPS

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In previous issues of Word Ways, attention has been drawn to US towns with names reflecting their position on the border between two states. Ed Wolpow’s article “Names on the Border” in May 1984 provides a definitive list, including examples such as Florala (border of Florida and Alabama) and Calneva (border of California and Nevada).

Another way of looking at the borders of states is to consider the 50 state names. Take them in alphabetical order and string them together to form a 412-character string. What words are formed across state boundaries? (Obviously a very different problem to that addressed by Ed Wolpow!)

Below is a list of all the words that can be spelled out from the end of one state name and into the following state name. For the sake of completeness I have added Alabama after Wyoming to ensure that there is a full circle of state names.

Most words are from Official Scrabble Words (International), and a few others have been taken from familiar sources: Webster’s Third, Webster’s Second, the Oxford English Dictionary, the Random House Dictionary, and Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (8th edition).

Alabama Alaska  
Arizona Alaska  
Alaska Arkansas  
Arkansas California  
California Colorado  
Colorado Connecticut  
Connecticut Delaware  
Delaware Florida  
Florida Georgia  
Georgia Hawaii  
Hawaii Idaho  
Idaho Illinois  
Illinois Indiana  
Indiana Iowa  
Iowa Kansas  
Kansas Kentucky  
Kentucky Louisiana  
Louisiana Maine  
Maine Maryland  
Maryland Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Michigan  
Michigan Minnesota  
Minnesota Mississippi  
Mississippi Missouri

maa, maal (OED), aa, aal  
aa  
aa  
scal (OED)  
Acol (OED)  
doc  
aref (OED), ref  
dag, age  
ah, aha  
hoi, hoil (OED), oil  
sin, sind  
ai  
waka, Akan (Web3), Akans (Web3)  
ask, asken (OED)  
yl (OED)  
nam, Nama (OED), am, ama, amain  
nema, em  
landmass  
tam, tamis, am, ami, amis, amiss
Missouri Montana
Montana Nebraska
Nebraska Nevada
Nevada New Hampshire
New Hampshire New Jersey
New Jersey New Mexico
New Mexico New York
New York North Carolina
North Carolina North Dakota
North Dakota Ohio
Ohio Oklahoma
Oklahoma Oregon
Oregon Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Rhode Island
Rhode Island South Carolina
South Carolina South Dakota
South Dakota Tennessee
Tennessee Texas
Texas Utah
Utah Vermont
Vermont Virginia
Virginia Washington
Washington West Virginia
West Virginia Wisconsin
Wisconsin Wyoming
Wyoming Alabama

Urim (Web2), rim
Montanan (Web3), nan, an, ane
skane (OED), kane, an, ane
Nevadan (Web3), dan, Dane (Web3), anew
hiren (OED), irene (Web3), ren, rene (Web2),
renew, ene, enew
seyn (OED), seyne (OED), eyne
icon, con, cone, on, one
knor (Web2)
nan, an, anorth (Web2)
tao
oo, ook (Web3)
Mao (OED)

For ten of the 50 statename borders it is not possible to spell out an overlapping word. The longest word stretching across a statename border is the nine-letter CAROLINAS, followed by the eight-letter LANDMASS and MONTANAN, and then the seven-letter NEVADAN and ISLANDS. The border with the most words and names stretching across it appears to be that of New Hampshire New Jersey with seven words. The familiar word AA occurs three times. No word is spellable across three state names (e.g., AIOWAK, TAOHIOO, SUTAHV). There is only one border where the same letter is repeated three times: Hawaii Idaho.