bigleaguepolitics.com

A conservative political site owned by a political consultant that has published false and misleading headlines and stories and that does not correct errors.

Ownership and Financing

Big League Politics is owned by Mustard Seed Media, a privately held company based in Raleigh, North Carolina, according to reporting by The Daily Beast. Mustard Seed is operated by Reilly O'Neal, a Republican political consultant who previously worked for Alabama U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore in 2017.

O'Neal's consulting firm, Tidewater Strategies, received payments from several Republican campaigns in the 2018 election cycle, including Moore ($202,361), Mississippi Senate candidate Chris McDaniel ($127,597), and Florida congressional candidate Carlos Reyes ($8,271), according to Federal Election Commission records. Through Tidewater, O'Neal was the campaign manager for 2014 North Carolina U.S. Senate candidate Greg Brannon.

O'Neal also runs a political action committee named the Principled Leadership Project, which ran ads called ‘Stop the Violent Left’ in support of Republican candidate Karen Handel in the 2017 special election in Georgia's 6th Congressional District. According to an August 2018 Daily Beast article, two other O'Neal companies — email vendor Rightside Lists and fundraising firm Capital Square Funding Group — were paid more than $100,000 by the Arizona Republican Kelli Ward's Senate campaign.

The site generates revenue by running advertisements.

Content

Big League Politics covers U.S. political news, stating on its About page: “We challenge powerful politicians in both the Republican and Democratic Parties. We are not conservative. We are not liberal.” However, the site reflects a conservative perspective, frequently publishing stories that criticize liberal causes and opponents of President Trump.

The site’s main sections include Guns, The Swamp, National Security, and Culture, with subsections including Deplorables and Snowflakes, which contain stories that laud conservative figures and criticize progressive causes and groups.

Typical stories have included "YOU BELONG IN JAIL!" Obama Confronted By Republicans At Andrew Gillum Rally (Video)" and "OUTRAGE! Youtube Blocks Trump Rally LiveStreams For 'Ridiculous Reason.'" Stories are often based on reporting from other conservative sites, including Lifezette, Breitbart, and InfoWars, although some articles cite "exclusive interviews" and refer to documents obtained by the site.

A notice on the bottom of articles states: "Bypass Tech Censorship! Facebook, Twitter and Google are actively restricting conservative content through biased algorithms. Silicon Valley doesn’t want you to read our articles. Bypass the censorship, sign up for our newsletter now!"

Credibility

Big League Politics has published numerous false reports without retracting or correcting them.

In June 2018, the site published a story headlined "UPDATED: Child's Skull Found At Alleged Sex-Trafficking Bunker Area In Tucson." The article was based on a claim made by Veterans on Patrol, a local advocacy group for homeless veterans, that had spread on social media.

However, the area in question was investigated by Tucson police, who determined it was not a "sex-trafficking bunker," but likely was a homeless encampment. The group also claimed that a skull was located near the area, but according to Pima County Chief Medical Examiner Gregory Hess, the skull had actually been located more than 20 miles from Tucson, in Marana, Arizona. Hess also clarified that the skull was that of an adult, not a child.

The falsehoods in the headline were debunked by fact-checking site Snopes one day after Big League Politics published its story. Nevertheless, Big League Politics kept its story up for months, until at least November 2018, before it deleted the text. It did append an "update" acknowledging that the medical examiner had determined the skull was that of an adult, but the article went on to challenge his determination, quoting a member of the veterans group who, without evidence, insisted his group had found the remains of a child.

In March 2018, the site inaccurately reported that David Hogg, one of the survivors of the February 14, 2018, school massacre in Parkland, Florida, and an outspoken advocate for gun control, was not actually in school the day of the shooting. In the article, "SHOCK: David Hogg Changes Story, Wasn't At School When Cruz Opened Fire," Big League Politics seized on a quote from Hogg in an interview with CBS News, in which he said, "On the day of the shooting, I got my camera and got on my bike and rode as fast as I could three miles from my house to the school...". The site claimed this quote showed that Hogg was not actually in the school during the shooting, despite widespread reporting and video footage, which emerged before Big League
Politics posted the article, that showed that he was there.

FactCheck.org and several news outlets disproved the claim, reporting that Hogg had been at school during the shooting, went home later, and then returned around 6 P.M. The bike ride Hogg mentioned to CBS News referred to his return to school grounds later that evening. One outlet that had also used this interview to challenge Hogg's account, RedState.com, later corrected its claims and apologized for the error. As of January 2019, Big League Politics had not corrected or updated its story.

In July 2018, Big League Politics posted an article headlined “EXCLUSIVE: Police Investigate NY Times Reporter For Breaking into GOP Staffer’s Home.” The article claimed that New York Times reporter Stephanie Saul had broken into the apartment of an aide to Virginia Republican Senate candidate Corey Stewart, and that police were investigating the matter. The aide, Brian Landrum, had publicly made the charge against Saul and said that he had brought the matter to the police in Prince William County, Virginia. Landrum had gained notoriety after news site Unicorn Riot published leaked logs of a private white supremacist Facebook group involving Landrum and one of the organizers of the deadly Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. Saul was reporting on Stewart’s campaign for the Times and sought to speak with Landrum about the Unicorn Riot leak.

The New York Times issued a statement saying that Saul had left a note for Landrum after a houseguest answered the door and that she did not enter the premises. Accounts of the incident in several news outlets included Landrum’s claim and the Times’ denial. The Big League Politics post did not include the Times’ statement, and, in noting that police had been investigating, it did not report that no charges were filed.

Because of Big League Politics’ repeated publication of false and misleading information and its propagation of discredited conspiracy theories, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not gather and report news responsibly.

The site injects a strong conservative slant in its coverage, despite its claim of neutrality on its About page. News stories are peppered with opinionated statements, as in the November 2018 article “CNN Calls Trump Campaign Ad Racist, Gites Zero Evidence.” The article states: “Once again, the mainstream press is the party driving racial divisiveness....Trump has consistently said — and Republican voters agree — that illegal immigration, regardless of the race of the alien, must be stopped. This is not a difficult premise to understand, but fake news media refuses acknowledge it [sic] because it is in their best interest, and the interest of their puppeteers at the DNC, to peg Republicans as ‘racists.’”

Because the site is not upfront about its conservative orientation and yet cherry picks stories and facts to advance an agenda, often misstating those facts, NewsGuard has determined that it does not responsibly handle the difference between news and opinion.

The site sometimes corrects factual inaccuracies in stories by appending a correction notice to the bottom of articles. However, because the site has not corrected some inaccurate stories such as those cited above, NewsGuard had concluded that Big League Politics does not regularly correct errors.

Big League Politics did not return NewsGuard’s request for comment, sent through the site’s Contact page, regarding its publishing of false information, irresponsible gathering and presenting of information, separation of news from opinion, and headlines.

### Transparency
Most stories name their author and link to a page containing their Twitter handle and a brief biography. The site contains a Contact Us page providing a form for users to submit general inquiries. Neither the About or Contact page names the site's owners or editors.

A Submit A Tip page encourages readers to submit story ideas to Patrick Howley, and articles by Howley link to a profile page that describes him as the Editor-in-Chief. But Howley is not clearly identified as the editor in a central location.

Big League Politics did not return NewsGuard’s request for comment regarding its lack of information about its owners and leaders.

Advertisements on the site are distinguishable from editorial content.

### History
Big League Politics was launched in early 2017, and the site was acquired by Mustard Seed Media in early 2018. According to The Daily Beast, Mustard Seed Media converted the official Twitter account of Roy Moore's Alabama Senate campaign into the Twitter account for Big League Politics.

In an interview with political and culture site Observer.com in April 2018, Howley said that Big League Politics was “the main site that put Seth Rich into the mainstream.” He was referring to the conspiracy theory that Rich, a Democratic National Committee staffer who was shot and killed in July 2016 in what Washington police believe was a robbery attempt, was actually assassinated for leaking DNC emails. Multiple fact-checking organizations, including PolitiFact, Snopes, and Factcheck.com, have found the Seth Rich theories to be false.

In February 2019, Big League Politics was the first media organization to report that Virginia Governor Ralph Northam's medical school yearbook page contained a photo of one man dressed in black face and another wearing Ku Klux Klan robes. Northam, a Democrat, confirmed that he was one of the people in the photo, although he did not say which one. One day later, however, he denied that he was in the photo. The reports about the yearbook photo prompted widespread calls for Northam’s
resignation, including from top Democrats in Virginia and nationwide.

Howley told NPR that he published the photo after receiving a tip from a “concerned citizen” and said that Northam was “clearly one of the two people in that photo.” However, Howley offered no additional evidence to back up his assertion.

Two days after the site broke the yearbook story, Big League Politics published an article reporting that a woman who had a mutual friend with Virginia Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax had made sexual assault allegations against Fairfax, who would become governor if Northam were to resign. Fairfax’s office called the report “defamatory and false” and threatened legal action against the site. Fairfax’s statement also said that The Washington Post had investigated the claims months earlier and had chosen not to report on them.

The Washington Post acknowledged in an article on its site that it had investigated the claims. The Post said that Fairfax and the woman presented different versions of the story, and it “could not find anyone who could corroborate either version.” The Post also said that it found no similar allegations against Fairfax. “Without that, or the ability to corroborate the woman’s account — in part because she had not told anyone what happened — The Washington Post did not run a story,” The Washington Post article stated.

Correction: An earlier version of this article misstated the name of 2014 North Carolina Senate candidate Greg Brannon.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

Sources

Ownership and Financing
- https://opencontests.com/companies/us_ix/150684
- https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/338973/000119312518000028/10-k.htm
- https://www.fec.gov/data/districts/118/2018C00652693/recipient_name/dweller estratégia/min_date/2018&max_date/2017&line_number/F3-17

Donations to Gun Rights PAC:
- https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidexpending/contri_all.php?cmtc=CN00627394&ltype=individual&cycle=2018

Donations to Pro-Life NC PAC:

Mentions work for Kelli Ward:

Content
- https://bigleaguepolitics.com/category/culture/snowflakes/
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Credibility
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