Limbaugh regularly promotes unsubstantiated conspiracy theories and misstates facts, on topics ranging from the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak to the impeachment investigation of U.S. President Donald Trump.

For example, in a February 2020 broadcast available on the website, Limbaugh asserted the Wuhan coronavirus was "being weaponized as yet another element to bring down Donald Trump," and said, "The coronavirus is the common cold, folks."

While the common cold is one of many types of human coronaviruses, the Wuhan coronavirus strain was only discovered in December 2019, and can be much more dangerous than the common cold, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold," the CDC says on its website.

In the same broadcast, Limbaugh said the coronavirus "probably is a ChiCom laboratory experiment that is in the process of being weaponized." According to a February 2020 article from Politifact.com, while there is a lab near Wuhan, where the outbreak began, that handles dangerous pathogens, there is no evidence to back the claim that this coronavirus strain was a "laboratory experiment" that was "weaponized," as Limbaugh claimed. A February 2020 study published in the journal Nature found that the Wuhan coronavirus is 96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.

Limbaugh continued, "Trump-Russia collusion, the Mueller investigation, now this — is all a gigantic cover-up of what the Democrats did." Limbaugh did not cite a source for the claim, and it is not clear what he meant by "collude."

There is no credible evidence to suggest that Russia had any involvement with Democrats, or with former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, ahead of the 2016 presidential election.

A two-year investigation by U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller into Russian meddling in the U.S. election resulted in the indictments of 13 Russian nationals and three entities, including the Internet Research Agency, on charges that they hacked into Democratic computers and spread disinformation on social media to influence the
In an October 2019 broadcast, Limbaugh falsely stated that the Democratic impeachment inquiry of President Trump was “being done in private” without “the opposition party” or “cross-examination.”

“And the thing that, of course, is top drawer today and has been all week is what little Adam Pencil Neck Schiff is doing behind closed doors in a so-called impeachment inquiry that doesn’t feature the opposition party, it doesn’t feature cross-examination, no transcripts are released, everything’s being done in private, only selected leaks. You know the drill.”

According to NBC News, USA Today, and the fact-checking group Politifact, Limbaugh’s claim was baseless: 47 House Republicans belonged to the three committees responsible for leading the inquiry into Trump.

In a transcript from an August 2019 show, headlined “The Same People Who Brought You the Russia Hoax Complain About Epstein Conspiracy Theories,” Limbaugh renewed a long-running conspiracy theory that former President Bill Clinton and former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are responsible for associates’ deaths that had been classified as suicides.

In a broadcast about the August 2019 suicide of convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, who had been linked to the Clintons, Limbaugh referred to “the Clinton Dead Pool.” ... A list of names here of all the people who died suspiciously who had known or worked for the Clintons beginning in Arkansas.

“In fact, there’s a word for what Epstein did in the jail. It’s called Arkancide,” Limbaugh said.

The New York City medical examiner’s office ruled in an autopsy that Epstein killed himself while alone in his cell at a federal facility in New York City, where he was held on several sex trafficking charges. There is no evidence that the Clinton family had any involvement in his death, or in any of the deaths of former associates.

In a 2016 broadcast, Limbaugh claimed that Hillary Clinton was responsible for starting the “birther” movement, a conspiracy alleging that former President Obama was not born in the U.S. and therefore ineligible for the presidency. A transcript on RushLimbaugh.com stated, “The birther movement, the Obama-is-not-an-American, the Obama-was-born-in-Kenya movement was started by the Hillary campaign in 2008.”

In fact, the “birther” conspiracy was started by an Illinois politician in 2004, according to a 2016 Politico. Donald Trump publicly questioned why Obama had not released his birth certificate in 2008 and in 2011. In the run up to the 2018 presidential campaign, a Clinton strategist released a memo in 2007 suggesting that the campaign focus on Obama’s childhood in Hawaii and Indonesia as a way to portray him as un-American. But the memo never claimed Obama was not a citizen by birth.

Because RushLimbaugh.com has repeatedly misstated facts and promoted unsubstantiated claims, NewsGuard has determined that the website repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid the use of deceptive headlines.

RushLimbaugh.com does not articulate a corrections policy. NewsGuard found only one correction, appended to a 2017 transcript, which does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for regularly correcting errors.

While Limbaugh is well-known as a conservative commentator, his website does not disclose his overall conservative perspective, which is apparent on the show and the website. The website says on a biography page for Limbaugh that the host “inspires millions of Americans to be the best they can be and keeps the country on course to a bright future.”

Limbaugh’s broadcasts regularly mix news and opinion. For example, in a January 2020 transcript, Limbaugh described Democratic U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff, who headed impeachment hearings in the U.S. House Intelligence Committee, as a “pencil neck.”

A February 2020 clip, headlined “The NFL Stands Up for the Flag Because of Donald Trump,” said, “I think Trump did the NFL one of the biggest favors that it’s ever been done by calling out these people, the players who were kneeling and disrespecting the flag. ... The NFL can’t possibly believe, could not possibly have believed that its number-one demographic didn’t like America, could it?

In another February 2020 transcript, headlined “The Democrat Party Implodes Exactly as I Predicted,” Limbaugh calls Democrats “the epitome of Wile E. Coyote. They are a laughingstock. They are a joke out there across the fruited plain. They’re not a laughingstock or joke in the media because the media’s invested in ‘em, wants ‘em to look good, wants ‘em to win.”

It is true that RushLimbaugh.com does not disclose that it airs and publishes opinion. However, the opinionated content on the site is mostly and visibly in the form or a radio talk show host’s on-air comments – which provides a signal to the website’s visitors that it is opinion. Nonetheless, because RushLimbaugh.com does not disclose...
that this opinion is exclusively partisan in favor of a pro-Trump, conservative point of view. NewsGuard has determined that the website does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly because its overriding agenda is never disclosed.

RushLimbaugh.com did not respond to NewsGuard’s two emails and three contact-form messages, including two inquiries in 2020, seeking comment on the website’s false claims, its editorial practices, lack of corrections, and mixing of news and opinion.

Transparency

RushLimbaugh.com notes its ownership by Premiere Networks Inc. in copyright language at the bottom of the website, which does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for clearly disclosing ownership. The website also does not mention Premiere’s parent company, iHeart Media.

The website does not identify anyone who is in charge of producing or editing content. However, the America’s Anchorman page provides biographical information about Limbaugh, which meets NewsGuard’s standard for providing information about content creators.

RushLimbaugh.com did not respond to NewsGuard’s two emails and three contact-form messages, including two inquiries in 2020, seeking comment about the site’s failure to disclose ownership or its editorial leadership.

Advertisements are distinguishable from editorial content.

History

The Rush Limbaugh Show was first nationally syndicated in 1988. RushLimbaugh.com was launched in 1995.

In February 2020, Limbaugh announced on his radio show that he had been diagnosed with advanced lung cancer, and would skip some of his shows to undergo treatment. One day later, President Trump presented Limbaugh with the Presidential Medal of Freedom during his State of the Union address, citing Limbaugh’s “decades of tireless devotion to our country,” and saying Limbaugh “is the greatest fighter and winner that you will ever meet.”

Editor’s Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on Feb. 27, 2020. This Nutrition Label was updated earlier in February 2020 to reflect NewsGuard’s determination that, contrary to an earlier version of this label, RushLimbaugh.com repeatedly publishes false content and does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for revealing ownership or disclosing who is in charge. The criteria checklist was adjusted accordingly.

Corrections: An earlier version of this label erroneously reported that Rush Limbaugh told Florida listeners not to heed hurricane warnings ahead of Hurricane Irma’s arrival in September 2017. Limbaugh instead told listeners that the warnings were unfounded. An earlier version of the label also misstated the date of a drop in Netflix stock prices, which was cited on a Limbaugh show. The shares fell on July 16, 2018.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

Sources

Ownership and Financing
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