A hyperpartisan conservative news and commentary site that regularly promotes conspiracy theories and publishes false information.

**Ownership and Financing**

WND is owned by Joseph and Elizabeth Farah through a Delaware company bearing the site’s former name, WorldNetDaily.com. Farah, WND’s CEO and editor-in-chief, launched the site with his wife in 1997 through the Western Center for Journalism, a nonprofit he had founded six years earlier. The site separated from the center in 1999 to become a for-profit enterprise.

In addition to WND.com, WorldNetDaily Inc. publishes an ad-free version of its content called WND Weekly, produces a digital and print magazine called WND Whistleblower, and runs an online store. The site earns revenue from advertising, sponsored content, and merchandise sales. It also solicits donations.

**Content**

On its About WND page, the site describes itself as “an independent news company dedicated to uncompromising journalism, seeking truth and justice and revitalizing the role of the free press as a guardian of liberty.”

WND publishes stories covering U.S. news, politics, and culture, with sections for Faith, Health, Education, and Money. Many stories come from outside news sites, primarily conservative outlets. WND typically reproduces parts of the article, followed by a link to the original source. Much of the original content on WND appears in the Opinion section.

**Credibility**

WND has frequently published false and misleading claims and has promoted debunked conspiracy theories, including about the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak.

For example, in February 2020, the site posted an opinion article headlined “Hold your breath – coronavirus is coming!” which falsely attributed information about the disease to a study from the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Safety. “Scientists at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Safety said 65 million could die as the disease spreads worldwide in 18 months,” the article stated.

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Safety did conduct a study with these estimates, but it was not of the current coronavirus strain. Rather, it was a simulation of a fictional coronavirus outbreak.

Asked about this, David Kupelian, the site’s Managing Editor, noted that the article was an opinion column. “As you know, attributing a statement expressed in an op-ed or opinion piece to the journalism organization itself would obviously be improper,” he said.

The site and its owners have been among the most vocal proponents of a baseless conspiracy theory that former U.S. President Barack Obama’s birth certificate may be illegitimate and that he may not be a natural-born citizen. Even after Obama released his long-form birth certificate in 2011, writers continued publishing stories raising doubts about its legitimacy.

In 2016, for example, one writer referenced the “investigation” into Obama’s birth by then-Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio and alleged that “evidence suggests the involvement of the Hawaiian government in the alleged fabrication.” The writer stated that “some of the images on the Obama document image apparently were copied from an original birth certificate that belongs to a woman named Johanna Atiree,” a claim that has not been corroborated by credible sources. Atiree claims to have kept her certificate locked away prior to the release of Obama’s; therefore, the writer claims, “only the Hawaiian government, which had the document image, could have used it to copy elements onto Obama’s.”

In a 2018 column, the site asked, “So, which is it – native-born son of Kenya, native-born son of Hawaii or native-born citizen of the world?”
the article, the writer referenced a 1991 description of Obama by his then-literary agent that erroneously reported his birthplace as Kenya — a mistake the agent publicly corrected.

In an email to NewsGuard, co-owner Joseph Farah defended the site's line of inquiry into Obama's birthplace, stating: "While the press was quick to salute it [Obama's birth certificate] without inspection, we subjected it to the kind of rigorous forensics tests worthy of such a national controversy." The document, whose authenticity was confirmed by the Hawaii State Department of Health, has not been shown by any credible forensic or other test to be a forgery.

The site has also promoted a conspiracy that suggests President Bill and Hillary Clinton have orchestrated or been involved in the deaths of numerous figures who were about to reveal incriminating evidence against them. The site has published a list of individuals — labeled "Clinton Death List" and referred to in other stories as the "Clinton Body Count" — whose "mysterious deaths" it says are connected to the Clinton family or Clinton Foundation. Official statements from law enforcement and medical authorities have indicated that many of the deaths were caused by health issues or suicides, with no evidence of foul play.

Among the first deaths cited by WND and other sites to support the Clinton murders theory was that of former Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster, in 1993. Five official investigations found Foster's death a suicide, yet WND has described "theories about foul play and cover-up" related to Foster's death. In 2017, the site added to its list Democratic National Committee (DNC) staffer Seth Rich, whom authorities said was murdered in a robbery attempt.

In one story, the site reported that Rich "reportedly sent more than 44,000 DNC emails to WikiLeaks," an allegation that was undermined in July 2018 when 12 Russian intelligence officers were indicted in the Russia hacking probe for allegedly stealing emails from the DNC and Hillary Clinton's campaign and coordinating their release with WikiLeaks. In November 2018, WND added an Editor's Note correcting the claim, a year and a half after the story was published, and just after NewsGuard asked Farah about the story.

Nevertheless, Rich remains on WND's "Clinton Death List," and several other stories on WND suggest a connection between Rich and the DNC email leak.

Asked about the site's list of Clinton-linked suspicious deaths, Farah said that "WND made no allegations that these deaths were the responsibility of Bill and Hillary Clinton. They were raised as strange anomalies. I totally reject that there is anything irresponsible in these reports."

However, the site's list includes a quotation from radio host Rush Limbaugh stating: "There is a Clinton body count." The list also quotes somebody identified as "Kosar" from conservative news site ThePoliticalInsider.com who asks, "Could this be Hillary Clinton silencing people who know too much?"

The site has published stories by vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and others that promoted the debunked link between vaccines and autism. For example, a 2016 column cited increased recorded cases of autism, coupled with mandatory measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines, as evidence of a causal connection between vaccines and autism. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, the National Institutes of Health, among other reputable scientific organizations, have publicly denounced claims of any such connection.

In addition to publishing false information and promoting conspiracies, writers frequently distort or cherry pick information to advance their opinions.

For example, in October 2018, writer Erik Rush published a column speculating that Cesar Sayoc, a Florida man charged in connection with a series of pipe bombs mailed to prominent Democrats, was a "leftist operative." Rush disregarded Sayoc's status as a registered Republican and his documented history of support for U.S. President Donald Trump and for far-right conspiracy theories, instead focusing on what he called "several aspects of Sayoc's background and alleged crimes that give rise to incredulity and appear somewhat inconsistent for a dedicated Trump supporter, including amateurish construction of the explosive devices, Sayoc's invisible (or at least limited) means of support and sketchy accounts from some of the ostensible targets." Rush then suggested that Sayoc may have been influenced by "mind control techniques and the like."

WND is an example of a website that uses a mixture of false claims, conspiracy theories, and distorted or incomplete reporting to promote a political agenda.
control techniques” used by “clandestine agencies.”

In his email to NewsGuard, Farah stated that he disagreed with Rush’s thesis, but defended “his right to make his case.”

Another column from November 2018 concerning the conviction of former Rep. Steve Stockman, a Texas Republican, ran under the headline, “The Deep State Imprisons another good guy.” The writer, Rachel Alexander, minimizes the evidence against Stockman that led to his conviction on 23 charges of fraud and related crimes, which the writer characterized as “vague.” Instead, Alexander stated without evidence that “The U.S. Department of Justice is full of deep state operatives” who “went after Stockman hard because he was a threat.”

Asked about the column, Farah said that Alexander is a “commentator, not a reporter, and welcome to offer provocative opinions at WND. We believe in free speech.”

Also in November 2018, Farah wrote a column titled “Where Did All Those Voters Come From?” In it, he voiced skepticism about voter turnout statistics in the 2018 U.S. midterm elections and asserted that “When Republicans vote in America, Republicans actually vote. That’s not the case among Democrats.” Farah cites as evidence of widespread Democratic voter fraud a video published by the conservative undercover sting group Project Veritas that shows a Travis County, Texas, poll worker discussing voter registration. “It would be wrong to speculate that these things could happen,” Farah wrote. “It’s a fact that this kind of activity is part of any Democratic Party game plan.”

In the video, the Project Veritas employee asks the poll worker if a Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient could vote, to which the poll worker responded by saying that he could, if he were registered. The poll worker did not appear familiar with DACA, whose recipients (undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children) are eligible for work permits, but are not citizens and therefore cannot vote. Ronald Morgan, the Travis County Chief Deputy Clerk whose office is in charge of the polling station where the incident took place, told The Hill that he had not found evidence of non-citizens voting, and also stated that it was illegal for Project Veritas to film a poll worker in the first place.

As of March 2019, no government authorities have reported evidence of widespread voter fraud in the 2018 midterm election in Texas or elsewhere.

Farah defended the column by emphasizing that it is his opinion and that the conclusion of the Travis County Chief Deputy Clerk “hardly stands as the last word.”

Because WND does not state a political or ideological orientation yet cherry-picks stories and facts to advance its point of view, NewsGuard has determined that it does not responsibly handle the difference between news and opinion. WND.com has a contact form on its site that readers can use to request corrections. However, multiple stories on the site with false information remain uncorrected.

Transparency

Stories written by the site’s columnists include the author’s names, with links to contact and biographical information. The Who’s Who page provides the names and email addresses of the site’s editorial leaders.

On an About Us page, WND discloses that Joseph and Elizabeth Farah founded the site. Separately, the Who’s Who page lists their positions as “Editor-in-Chief, Chairman, and CEO” and “Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer,” respectively.

In an email to NewsGuard, Farah stated that he and his wife have a controlling interest in WorldNetDaily.com Inc., and that there are 60 to 70 additional shareholders. However, the site does not clearly identify its owners and therefore does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for clearly disclosing information about ownership.

In a later email sent to Farah asking about the site’s ownership disclosure, Farah wrote that “We’re not interested in cooperating with you any longer.”

Advertisements are distinguished from editorial content.

History

The site was founded in 1997 and was formerly known as World Net Daily. Columnists have included conservative pundit Ann Coulter, actor Chuck Norris, singer Ted Nugent, and conspiracy theorist Jerome Corsi,
In 2016, The New York Times reported that Joseph Farah helped encourage Donald Trump's promotion of the claim that Obama's was not born in the U.S. Trump's public pressure culminated in President Obama releasing his long-form birth certificate. Farah told NewsGuard that he spoke with President Trump on several occasions to discuss the subject.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on Feb. 28, 2020. Previously, this label was updated to reflect NewsGuard's determination that the site does not meet the standard for revealing ownership. The criteria checklist was adjusted accordingly.

Written by: Kendrick McDonald
Edited by: Eric Efron, Amy Westfeldt

Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

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