

# prntly.com

A conservative and libertarian news site that has published false and misleading stories that often support the Trump administration, including misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 12.5/100

## Ownership and Financing

Prntly.com was founded by Alex Portelli, a libertarian political activist from Albany, New York. Portelli owns and manages the site, according to Portelli's LinkedIn profile and a 2016 report in the Washington Post. Portelli has managed several other businesses, including a coffee shop in Albany, according to the Post. He founded the site after serving a prison term for drug possession and launching a failed bid to become Albany's mayor.

Prntly.com earns revenue from advertising.

## Content

Prntly.com, which calls itself "America's Top News Site" on the homepage, covers national politics from a partisan perspective in support of U.S. President Donald Trump. The website's About page also says that Prntly's goal is to reach "Trump supporters who felt they had no voice in the media."

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump, then the Republican nominee, often shared the site's flattering articles about him. The site's coverage promotes President Trump's achievements, criticism of Democratic politicians, and a perceived media bias against conservatives. Frequent topics on the site include the 2020 U.S. presidential race, socialism, taxes, gun rights, and racial issues.

Typical headlines include "Bernie Sanders' been a lazy free loader his entire life," "The Democrats' Ideas Are Scaring The Sh\*t Out Of Mainstream USA," and "Online Report Claims Migrants Raid Italian Chapel, Attack Parishioner, Urinate On Virgin Mary."

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✓ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✗ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Some articles only include a headline and a few sentences of text.

#### Credibility

Prntly.com's articles, which are often credited to "Prntly Editorial Board," sometimes cite other news reports, such as local television affiliates, or link to published research. Other articles do not cite direct sources.

Prntly.com has frequently published false and misleading content, including false claims about the COVID-19 global pandemic. For example, a February 2020 article titled "Liberal Harvard Professor May Have Been Behind Coronavirus" promoted the false theory that the coronavirus was engineered, and that a Harvard chemistry professor charged with lying to the government about his affiliation with a Chinese university in Wuhan, China, was linked to the outbreak.

The article said that the professor, Charles Lieber, "faces federal charges" relating to Wuhan and then noted, "Wuhan is ironically where the coronovirus [sic] broke out". The article continued, "Ironically, China's only biological research lab for handling weaponized viruses is in Wuhan, China. ... All signs point to a fact that says the virus was man made."

Charging documents released by the U.S. Department of Justice about Lieber's January 2020 arrest do not mention the coronavirus. In an email to the website FactCheck.org about charges that Lieber was connected to the coronavirus outbreak, a Justice Department spokesperson wrote, "The Department of Justice has made no such allegation" about Lieber.

The claim that the coronavirus was engineered and leaked from a military lab has been denied by biologists, fact-checkers, and major health organizations. A February 2020 report by the World Health Organization said, "increasing evidence demonstrates the link between the 2019-nCoV [Wuhan coronavirus] and other similar known coronaviruses

(CoV) circulating in bats.” A study published the same month in Nature found that the virus is “96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

In a March 16, 2020, article republished from libertarian former congressman Ron Paul’s website, RonPaulInstitute.org, Ron Paul claimed without substantiation that U.S. infectious disease specialist Anthony Fauci’s statements about the death rate for the coronavirus were not accurate.

Paul, who called Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases “the chief fearmonger of the Trump administration,” wrote that Fauci “testified to Congress that the death rate for the coronavirus is ten times that of the seasonal flu, a claim without any scientific basis.”

Experts told PolitiFact that Fauci’s estimate in mid-March 2020 of a death rate for seasonal influenza at 0.1 percent and for coronavirus at 1 percent, was reasonable based on the available data. “While it is early in the outbreak, there is enough data to say that 1% is likely in a fairly reasonable approximation with some scientific basis in data,” Dr. Amesh Adalja, senior scholar at Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Health Security, told PolitiFact.

PolitiFact also cited the World Health Organization’s March 16, 2020, report tracking COVID-19 cases worldwide, and at the time recorded 167,515 confirmed cases and 6,606 deaths. The death rate for the disease would have been 3.9 percent at that time. For the week ending March 7, 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated 36 million people had the flu, and 22,000 people had died -- for a death rate of approximately 0.06 percent.

Another March 2020 article on the pandemic, titled “More people died of asthma this week alone than covid-19 killed all year,” made inaccurate claims about death rates for asthma to argue that the virus was not a serious threat. “Asthma for example kills on average 1000 people a day. So this past week, 7000 people

worldwide died of asthma. That's more than the Coronavirus outbreak has killed since it came around in December," the article said.

The Prntly.com article did not provide a source for the statistic that 1,000 people a day die of asthma. However, that number is not accurate, according to a 2016 paper published by the medical journal Multidisciplinary Respiratory Medicine. The paper cited World Health Organization data from 2007 which found that about 685 people die worldwide each day from asthma.

A February 2020 article titled "Under Bernie's Plan, El Chapo Could Vote In US Presidential Elections" incorrectly claimed that Joaquín Guzmán, a Mexican drug trafficker serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison, would be eligible to vote under former Democratic presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders' voting rights proposal.

The article said that the Vermont senator wants "to let felons and illegals vote." Although Sanders had stated that he thinks the right to vote should be extended to incarcerated Americans, he never suggested that non-citizens should vote in American elections. "Every American citizen must be able to vote. Period," Sanders tweeted in April 2019. Guzmán is a Mexican citizen.

A January 2020 article titled "Israel BANS Rep Omar From Entering Country, Hints She's Terror Security Risk" said that the site had evidence that Minnesota U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar was banned from entering Israel in August 2019 because of a "terror related security reason." Prntly did not explain its "evidence."

Omar and Rep. Rashida Tlaib were barred from entering the country because both support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a political movement that opposes the Israeli government's policies in the West Bank, according to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The prime minister told reporters at the time that members of Congress are allowed entry to Israel on an automatic basis, except in

the case of those who support BDS. “There is only one exception and it is the BDS law that obligates us to evaluate the entry of people who support BDS,” Netanyahu said, according to the Times of Israel.

Prntly.com has also published unlabeled satirical articles alongside news stories. For example, a March 2020 article titled “Chavez is elected president of hell and lava begins to run out” appeared on the site’s homepage. While the story contains the label “satire” in small print at the bottom of the story, users are not aware that the news is fabricated until after clicking on a headline and reading to the end of the story.

Because Prntly.com has repeatedly published false and misleading content to promote its views, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

Prntly.com does not post a corrections policy, and NewsGuard could not find any corrections posted on the site.

Prntly.com’s About Us page says clearly that it supports conservative and libertarian causes and calls the website “the most vigorous defender of Donald Trump.” Its news coverage regularly includes conservative and pro-Trump opinion. Because this perspective is clearly disclosed, NewsGuard has determined that Prntly.com does not fail NewsGuard’s standard for handling the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

NewsGuard did not receive a response to two emails sent through the site’s contact page and a Facebook message sent to Portelli, the site’s owner, seeking comment on Prntly.com’s false claims and its failure to issue corrections.

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#### Transparency

Although Prntly.com notes that Portelli created the site in 2014, the site does not state whether Portelli is still involved with the site, and does not identify any owner.

Prntly.com does not provide any information about its editorial leadership or its staff. Most articles are attributed only to “Prntly Editorial Board.” When authors are identified, no biographical or contact information is provided.

The site frequently inserts advertisements for President Trump and solicits users to purchase Trump merchandise within news articles. For example, a break in a March 2020 article titled “Democrats Force Top Journalist To Retire After He Compared Bernie To Nazis” featured a large advertisement for pro-Trump merchandise. The article included the sentence, “Do you support President Trump? Claim your free flag and hat now,” in the middle of the article, as if it were part of the news story.

NewsGuard did not receive a response to two emails sent through the site’s contact page and a Facebook message sent to Portelli inquiring about Prntly.com’s labeling of advertisements and its lack of disclosure of its ownership, editorial leadership, and content creators.

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## History

Prntly.com was founded in 2014, according to its About page, as “an online printing website for conservative and libertarian candidates for office.”

During the 2016 presidential campaign, the site posted the unsubstantiated claim that the campaign manager for U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, who ran against Trump for the Republican presidential nomination, approved an advertisement attacking President Trump’s wife, Melania. The story was later deleted from the website.

The Washington Post reported in April 2016 that Portelli embraced libertarianism while serving a four-year prison sentence from 2009 to 2013 for possession of ecstasy, according to New York State legal documents. The Washington Post also reported that Portelli was briefly a candidate in Albany, New York’s 2013 mayoral race, although he was later replaced on the ballot by his

mother. As a parolee, Alex Portelli would not have been able to vote in the race. Portelli's mother, Theresa Portelli, lost the race to Democrat Kathy Sheehan.

Written by: [Gabby Deutch](#)

Edited by: [Amy Westfeldt](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

## Sources

Ownership and Financing

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Content

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Credibility

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Transparency

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