

# theconservativetreehouse.com

A conservative website that has published false claims about U.S. politics and the COVID-19 pandemic.



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

## Ownership and Financing

The website does not disclose its ownership, and NewsGuard was not able to determine who owns it.

The Conservative Treehouse derives revenue through advertisements and reader donations, which the site solicits through PayPal.

## Content

TheConservativeTreehouse.com's About page describes the website as a "last refuge" for conservatives and describes in detail how conservatives are different from liberals: "Fear is at the core of liberalism and love/trust is at the core of conservatism. Liberalism is about control. Conservatism is about self-empowerment."

The Conservative Treehouse features "open threads" on topics such as presidential politics and local elections, with readers encouraged to leave comments and discuss politics. The site publishes commentaries on news items based on press releases, videos, or transcripts of President Trump or other administration officials speaking or attending events.

Typical headlines on the site include "President Trump Meets With Republican Members of Congress – Video and Transcript," "May 8th – 2020 Presidential Politics – Trump Administration Day #1205," and "Lou Dobbs Interviews Devin Nunes About Declassification and Release of Witness Transcripts..."

## Credibility

The Conservative Treehouse has published false information and unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Score:** 30/100

- ✗ 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.](#)

For example, an April 2020 article titled “Dr. Smith is Very Optimistic About Hydroxychloroquine Treatment: ‘This Is the Beginning Of the End of the Pandemic,’” made unsubstantiated claims about the effectiveness of the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine as a treatment for COVID-19.

The article was based on a Fox News interview with a doctor, Stephen Smith, who said he had treated more than 70 patients with the drug and had positive results. “Dr. Smith reports that no patient who has undergone the Hydroxychloroquine (sic) treatment has required intubation (a ventilator,”

TheConservativeTreehouse.com article said. “That positive outcome is statistically impossible if the hydroxychloroquine treatment regime did not work.”

International health authorities have not concluded that hydroxychloroquine, which is used to treat malaria and rheumatoid arthritis, is a proven treatment for the COVID-19 virus. Some early studies have suggested that it could be effective, such as a March 2020 study by French researchers who tested the drug on 20 people. However, another March 2020 study conducted in China found that the drug was not more effective for 15 COVID-19 patients than a regimen of bed rest, supplemental oxygen, and antiviral drugs for another group of patients.

A March 26, 2020, story, “Fear and Panic for A Purpose – The Coronavirus Evolves Into ‘The Blue Plague,’” claimed that “Blue doctors and Blue nurses, aligned with the political resistance effort,” were not telling the truth when they shared videos on social media describing conditions in which New York City hospitals were facing a surge of COVID-19 patients. “Of course, all of the emphasis is false, everyone is getting treated, and so far the pandemic has created no more of a crisis than a high-flu season,” the article said.

Data tracked by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as statements of New York officials on March 26, 2020, contradict The Conservative Treehouse’s claim that New York City

hospitals were not seeing “a surge” of COVID-19 patients and that the pandemic was no worse than a flu season.

In a March 28, 2020, weekly summary of COVID-19 cases in the U.S., the CDC said that in the final week of March, hospital emergency room visits for influenza-like illnesses decreased, while hospital visits for COVID-19 related illnesses increased, according to the CDC. The report also said that deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza had increased to 8.2 percent, “and is above the epidemic threshold of 7.2%”.

On March 26, 2020, the same day that TheConservativeTreehouse.com article was published, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said that New York’s intensive-care hospitalizations for COVID-19 had gone up by 45 percent to nearly 1,300 from the day before. Cuomo reported an additional 100 COVID-19 deaths in New York over a 24-hour period, which was an increase of approximately 35 percent.

In April 2020, the website’s most widely shared article, according to social media engagement, claimed that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, “Vermont has designated the selling of seeds as “non-essential” and blocked [them] from purchase.” The site based its claim on a tweet that showed a sign pasted to a seed aisle in a Walmart, which did say that items in this “non-essential” area were not available for purchase.

However, the article did not obtain comment from Walmart or the state of Vermont, which later issued a statement saying that Walmart had misunderstood a state order and should not have put up the sign. Vermont’s Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets released a statement titled “Are Agriculture Seeds Deemed Essential?? Yes.” “We’d like to set the record straight.”

A November 2018 story about the confirmation hearings of Supreme Justice Brett Kavanaugh claimed without reliable evidence that California professor Christine Blasey Ford was “selected/recruited” by a

former FBI agent and “her allies” to accuse Kavanaugh of sexual assault. Ford said during her testimony at Kavanaugh’s confirmation hearings that “I believe it is my civic duty to tell you what happened to me while Brett Kavanaugh and I were in high school.” There is no evidence that she was recruited by the FBI.

Because The Conservative Treehouse has published false and misleading claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic, NewsGuard has determined that the website repeatedly publishes false content and does not gather and present information responsibly.

The site does not state a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find any examples of corrections. Additionally, several examples of false or misleading stories remain on the site unchanged.

The website has not responded to four NewsGuard emails, including two in 2018, seeking comment about the website’s editorial practices, including false claims, as well as its failure to regularly post corrections.

The site’s About Us page, and its name, clearly describes the website’s conservative point of view. Its content reflects that perspective, and individual articles are not labeled as news, which is why NewsGuard has determined that the site handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Headlines are often general, such as “2020 Presidential Politics -- Trump Administration Day #1210,” and generally do not repeat false claims found in stories.

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#### Transparency

The site does not disclose information about its owners, editors, or content creators. All stories that were reviewed by NewsGuard were only attributed to “sundance,” and did not include any biographical or contact information. The only contact information on the site is a general email address.

Two emails sent to this address in 2018, seeking information about the failure to disclose those responsible for the site’s content, received no response.

NewsGuard also sent two emails in 2020 seeking comment on the site's disclosure of ownership, editorial leaders, and content creators, but did not receive a response.

Advertisements are distinguishable from editorial content.

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## History

According to a domain registry search, TheConservativeTreehouse.com was created in 2011.

*Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on May 14, 2020, with newer content on the site, including coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The label's rating was changed to reflect NewsGuard's determination that TheConservativeTreehouse.com now meets NewsGuard's standard for handling the difference between news and opinion responsibly. The criteria checklist has been updated accordingly.*

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

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Credibility

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Transparency

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History

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