

puppetstringnews.com

A conservative website that has frequently published conspiracy theories about U.S. politics, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.



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

Ownership and Financing

PuppetStringNews.com appears to be owned by David Petersen, although his name does not appear on the site. However, PuppetStringNews.com is registered under his name, and photographs on the Puppet String News' Facebook page match photos of Petersen that are published on his personal Facebook page.

Puppet String News runs advertisements and solicits donations through a PayPal account.

Content

The Twitter profile for Puppet String News describes the site as an "Anti mainstream news source, created by a US NAVY vet." The profile also includes references to "Make America great again," a slogan popularized by U.S. President Donald Trump, and "QAnon," a conspiracy theory that details a plot against President Trump by a "deep state" of global elites, based on the cryptic posts of an anonymous writer who goes by "Q."

PuppetStringNews.com publishes stories on the news of the day and U.S. politics from a conservative perspective. Frequent topics include immigration, allegations of voter fraud, and abortions. Stories generally insert commentary into news accounts by other conservative organizations, some of which NewsGuard has found to have repeatedly published false content, such as The Gateway Pundit, The Federalist, and TruePundit.com.

Credibility

Puppet String News has repeatedly published false information and promoted conspiracy theories without evidence, including in stories related to the COVID-19 virus.

Score: 7.5/100

- ✗ 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, a January 2020 article headlined “Simulation for coronavirus ran three months ago by John Hopkins scientist,” said, “we now have information that a Johns Hopkins scientist ran a simulation three months ago with the exact same virus causing problems in China. With this information of a Johns Hopkins scientist running a test of coronavirus, you can guarantee what we are seeing with coronavirus is an event associated with the Deep State?”

While the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security did participate in a simulated emergency preparedness exercise in October 2019, that simulation involved a mock coronavirus with different features than the COVID-19 virus, according to FactCheck.org.

“For the scenario, we modeled a fictional coronavirus pandemic, but we explicitly stated that it was not a prediction,” the center said in a January 2020 statement. “Instead, the exercise served to highlight preparedness and response challenges that would likely arise in a very severe pandemic.”

In a March 2020 article, headlined “Trump exposes thousands of Federal Government delivered ventilators found in New York storage,” the site claimed the state of New York was hiding ventilators provided by the federal government during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article only cited a tweet by the president, reading “Thousand of Federal Government (delivered) Ventilators found in New York storage. NY. must distribute NOW!”

“Looks like we're going to soon find out that the third Democrat governor in America is preventing medical services that can combat coronavirus, as Trump has exposed thousands of Federal Government delivered ventilators have been found in New York storage,” the article said, referring to Democratic New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo. “New York’s virus rate in death and cases would probably be much lower if ventilators weren’t hidden.”

An April 2020 fact-checking article from Reuters found no evidence that New York was “hiding ventilators,” as Puppet String News claimed. A spokesperson for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene said that as of March 31, “nearly all” of the 2,500 total ventilators received from the federal government had been shipped out to hospitals. An April 2020 report in ProPublica said that New York City stockpiled several hundred ventilators in 2006 as part of a plan to combat another potential flu pandemic, but auctioned them off at least five years ago due to maintenance costs.

In an April 2020 article headlined “It's a big joke, CDC finally admits 90 percent of virus cases have underlying health issues,” the site suggested that authorities have exaggerated the death toll associated with the virus to hurt President Trump.

“This virus situation is once again highlighting to the American people how much of a joke it is, as the CDC has finally come clean on the fact that other health issues are being used to pad the stats on the virus ... Probably so the media can fear monger and so the Democrat establishment can change voting laws in America,” the article said.

It is true that an April 2020 report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that 90 percent of people who died from COVID-19 had one or more underlying health conditions. However, this does not mean those conditions “are being used to pad the stats on the virus,” as the article claimed. The CDC’s existing guidelines on death certificates, last revised in 2003, say the cause-of-death section should include two parts: the sequence of conditions that led directly to death, as well as “other significant conditions that contributed to the death, but did not lead to the underlying cause.”

Other stories on the site have advanced debunked political conspiracy theories, such as the claim that former President Bill Clinton and former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton orchestrated the deaths

of people distantly connected to them or their nonprofit foundation. In July 2018, for example, the site published an article titled “New Jersey couple set to testify to Grand Jury against the Clinton’s (sic) die in New Jersey home explosion,” which tied a real incident that killed two people in New Jersey to the Clintons.

The couple killed in the explosion, John and Carole Paladino, had no known connection to the Clintons, according to articles published in 2018 by Snopes and FactCheck.org. A July 2018 article on NJ.com said that the explosion was caused by natural gas, and an investigation found no evidence of foul play.

An October 2018 story, headlined “Death toll/injured of Synagogue shooting is oddly the date of November 6th the day of the midterm election,” promoted a conspiracy theory about a mass shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue that killed 11 people and wounded six others. Without evidence, the author speculated, “it absolutely now feels that this shooting was Deep State organized...Because why would the casualty total be the date of the 2018 midterm election?”

The site also published false claims about the group of thousands of Central American migrants traveling to the U.S.-Mexico border in 2018. In an October 2018 story titled, “UN behind caravan, tells America to stand down to the caravan,” the site distorted comments from a United Nations special investigator on the human rights of migrants, who stated that the U.S. should consider the rights of individual migrants rather than taking collective action against them.

Puppet String News reported instead that “the UN is basically telling America along with Mexico to stand down,” and falsely reported that liberal billionaire philanthropist George Soros was funding the caravan, stating that “we obviously have Soros and his organizations behind this caravan.” In a separate story, the site referenced unspecified “documents” and repeated the false claim that “we already know that the United Nations and Soros are working in tandem to flood America with these caravan invaders.”

Because Puppet String News has promoted false and unsubstantiated claims in its articles and headlines, NewsGuard has determined that the site has repeatedly published false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The site does not state its policy for correcting errors. NewsGuard could not find any corrections and numerous articles containing false claims have not been corrected.

The closest that Puppet String News comes to disclosing its political perspective is under a section called "Author," found on every page of the site, that says, "Anti msm news, Created by a US NAVY vet." While articles are not labeled as either opinion or news, they often contain opinionated statements supporting a conservative, pro-President Trump perspective.

For example, an April 2020 article about the COVID-19 virus, headlined "US death projection for nothing burger virus drops to only 60,000," stated, "The virus crisis is going to turn into the biggest joke the world has ever witnessed in history that was based on a massive fear campaign before an election cycle...Mainly used by Democrats to push their agenda."

Another April 2020 article praised Republicans for loosening stay-at-home order restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Once again we see the proof coming out that the Democrat party is all about slavery and the Republican party is all about freedom, as the states of Georgia and Tennessee under their Republican Governors are now the first states in America who have plans to go back to normal life," the article said.

A February 2020 article, titled, "Trump is still yo President, Senate finds Trump not guilty 52-48 then 53-47...Democrats suffer epic fail," said, "Finally it looks like the Democrat attempt to coup President Trump with the impeachment hoax is officially over, and Democrats have suffered a major defeat during an election cycle."

Because Puppet String News does not disclose its conservative political perspective to readers and often includes opinionated statements in its articles without labeling them as opinion, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Petersen did not respond to NewsGuard's emailed questions in November 2018 seeking comment about the site's false content, lack of corrections, and mixing of news and opinion. Instead, he sent a screenshot of a Media Resource Center release titled "Top Journalists that Serve on Soros-Funded Boards of Directors or Advisers." The conservative media criticism group identified NewsGuard co-CEO Gordon Crovitz as a member of an advisory board to nonprofit news organization ProPublica, which does receive funding from Soros' Open Society Foundations.

Peterson wrote, "HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA. So you're another Soros version of Snopes," in a reference to the fact-checking organization Snopes.com.

In an unsigned response to a 2020 NewsGuard email to Petersen seeking comment about the website's COVID-19 stories, PuppetStringnews.com said, "We know Steve Brill is funded by George Soros...Now f--- off." The message linked to a 1999 New York Post story that reported that Soros had invested \$10 million in Brill's Content, a magazine founded by NewsGuard co-CEO Steven Brill.

Soros is not an investor in NewsGuard. The full list of NewsGuard's actual investors is available on the NewsGuard website: www.newsguardtech.com.

Transparency

The site does not provide information about its ownership or leadership, other than stating that the site was created by a "US NAVY vet." The site does not list authors of individual stories or provide any information about its content creators. The site's Contact page does not provide any contact information, instead directing readers to its Facebook and Twitter pages.

Petersen responded to NewsGuard's inquiries in November 2018 about the site's disclosure of ownership and content creators with an email that implied NewsGuard was funded by Soros. He did not respond to an additional email in November 2018 that reiterated NewsGuard's questions. Petersen did not answer NewsGuard's questions about the website's transparency in an April 2020 email.

Advertisements on the site are distinguishable from editorial content.

History

The domain was registered in 2016.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on April 30, 2020, with new examples of the site's content.

Written by: [Kendrick McDonald](#), [John Gregory](#).

Edited by: [Josh Keefe](#), [Amy Westfeldt](#)

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

Sources

Ownership and Financing

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/about.html>
<https://domainbigdata.com/puppetstringnews.com>
<https://web.archive.org/web/20200116104711/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/about.html>
<https://www.facebook.com/puppetstringnews/>
<https://twitter.com/NewsPuppet>
https://www.facebook.com/david.petersen.794?fref=search&_tn_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARBDRJg_Ud0dmGXXOwV55maH5SSCXTZt3sOmZGmIDcmJcXWKQxcNa7oLOZPNTKiyyEQ1xPp5NJbFBbth
<https://www.paypal.com/donate/?token=00xWrTuEUV5927Cd7EkeyjojUyDPdbuAi5Km1dYHE2RRFE0qDoOgHiqN0W5n1RD4wn6ijG&country.x=US&locale.x=US>

Content

Story from The Federalist:
<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/cbs-news->

[pulls-a-jussie-uses-video-of-nurse-lying-about-working-conditions-during-virus](#)

Story from True Pundit:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/bill-gates-vaccine-associate-dr-fauci-admits-death-projection-of-100000-240000-overestimated>

Story from Gateway Pundit:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/california-democrat-governor-predicted-255-million-virus-cases-in-ca-california-only-has-21500>

Abortion story:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/unsealed-documents-show-planned-parenthood-sold-aborted-body-parts-for-25000>

Immigration:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/democrat-controlled-areas-now-looking-to-give-illegal-aliens-relief-aid>

Voter fraud:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/federal-data-reveals-over-16-million-mail-in-ballots-went-missing-in-2016-and-2018-elections>

Credibility

Coronavirus simulation:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200429204201/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/simulation-for-coronavirus-ran-three-months-ago-by-john-hopkins-scientist>

<http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/newsroom/center-news/2020-01-24-Statement-of-Clarification-Event201.html>

<https://www.factcheck.org/2020/01/new-coronavirus-wasnt-predicted-in-simulation/>

Pre-planned #1:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200429212456/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/watch-how-quick-the-virus-ends-as-trump-will-suspend-immigration-into-america-during-virus>

Pre-planned #2:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/trump-considering-possible-travel-restrictions-at-us-mexico-border-over-coronavirus>

Pre-planned #3:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/trump-threatens-presidential-authority-to-shut-down-congress-to-get-his-nominees-approved>

CDC stats story:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200430151819/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/its-a-big-joke-cdc-finally-admits-90-percent-of-virus-cases-have-underlying-health-issues>

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6915e3.htm?s_cid=mm6915e3_w

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/misc/hb_cod.pdf

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvss/vsrg/vsrg03-508.pdf>

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/covid19/85925>

NY ventilator story:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200430155431/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/trump-exposes-thousands-of-federal-government-delivered-ventilators-found-in-new-york-storage>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-coronavirus-ventilators-stu/false-claim-ventilators-for-coronavirus-treatment-stuck-at-a-new-york-city-warehouse-idUSKBN21L2XP>

21 million dead:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/something-darker-going-on-in-china-21-million-cell-phones-and-840000-landlines-canceled-in-china>

Calls hydroxychloroquine a cure:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/bill-gates-vaccine-associate-dr-fauci-admits-death-projection-of-100000-240000-overestimated>

Clinton explosion story: <http://archive.fo/awUcx>

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/new-jersey-couple-explosion/>

https://www.nj.com/gloucester-county/2018/07/gas_leak_caused_explosion_that_killed_couple_destr.html

<https://www.factcheck.org/2018/07/home-explosion-spawns-clinton-conspiracy-theory/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181106233916/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/death-tollinjured-of-synagogue-shooting-is-oddly-the-date-of-november-6th-the-day-of-the-midterm-election>

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/un-behind-caravan-tells-america-to-stand-down-to-the-caravan>

<https://archive.fo/IXxXq#selection-249.35-249.108>

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/un-order-migrant-caravan/>

<https://www.voanews.com/a/un-says-countries-must-allow-people-at-risk-to-request-asylum/4632347.html>

<https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2018/10/31/george-soros-and-migrant-caravan-how-lie-multiplied-online/1824633002/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200429172531/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/this-cant-be-legal-drop-boxes-for-ballots-being-used-in-oregon-for-midterms>

<https://sos.oregon.gov/voting/pages/drop-box-locator.aspx>

<https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/statistics/vote-by-mail-timeline.pdf>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181106231535/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/unsoros-funded-caravan-involves-middle-east-refugees-dhs-secretary-confirms-after-intel-brief>

<https://www.factcheck.org/2018/10/no-evidence-soros-is-funding-immigrant-caravan/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181106232051/https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/former-obama-campaign-staffer-arrested-for-vandalizing-jewish-synagogues>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/14/nyregion/after-years-in-foster-care-intern-adopted-by-city-hall-catches-a-break.html>

News/opinion #1:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/us-death-projection-for-nothing-burger-virus-drops-to-only-60000>

News/opinion #2:

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/georgia-and-tennessee-under-republican-governors-become-first-states-to-move-towards-reopening>

News/opinion #3:

[https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/trump-is-still-
yo-president-senate-finds-trump-not-guilty-52-48-then-
53-47democrats-suffer-epic-fail](https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/trump-is-still-
yo-president-senate-finds-trump-not-guilty-52-48-then-
53-47democrats-suffer-epic-fail)

[https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/desperate-
people-will-do-desperate-things-obama-now-reported-
as-expected-to-campaign-with-biden](https://www.puppetstringnews.com/blog/desperate-
people-will-do-desperate-things-obama-now-reported-
as-expected-to-campaign-with-biden)

Transparency

<https://www.puppetstringnews.com/contact.html>