

thewashingtonstandard.com

A site covering U.S. and world news from a conservative perspective that has published numerous false articles promoting discredited conspiracy theories, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

Score: 25/100

Ownership and Financing

The Washington Standard is owned by Tim Brown, who is also identified on the site as its founder and editor. Brown is also an editor and author at conservative news sites FreedomOutpost.com, SonsOfLibertyMedia.com, and GunsInTheNews.com. Content that appears on The Washington Standard also often appears on these sites.

The Washington Standard derives revenue from advertisements and sponsored links. It also solicits donations.

Content

The Washington Standard publishes news and commentaries that generally support a conservative perspective, although the site does not profess to have a point of view. The About Us page states that “The purpose of The Washington Standard is to provide news, commentary and information from the US and around the world.”

Sections on the site include US News, Politics, Constitution & Law, World News, and Economy. A “Gun News” link directs readers to GunsInTheNews.com, and a “National Headlines Today” link directs readers to ReformedMedia.net, a curated collection of stories that are published mostly from conservative news sites.

Many articles and headlines published by The Washington Standard are republished from other news sites. The Washington Standard credits these outlets at the bottom of the story.

Typical articles on The Washington Standard have run under headlines including “Truck Drivers Say They Won’t Deliver To Cities with Defunded Police Departments,” “The Change Agents SEE You!,” and “On The Right To Keep & Bear Arms.”

-  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.](#)

Site owner Tim Brown told NewsGuard in a February 2019 phone interview that he started The Washington Standard because he believes that “people need to know the truth that oftentimes the mainstream media will not cover. They will not provide certain facts for certain things. They will not provide certain documentation for certain things, and it doesn’t matter if it’s the right or the left.”

He added that articles on the site support his worldview, which he described as upholding the Christian Bible and the U.S. Constitution. “The issue is the law,” he said. “That’s what we support. Not a person. Not a party. We support the law.”

Credibility

TheWashingtonStandard.com has frequently promoted false claims and unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, the site has repeatedly claimed without evidence that the rollout of 5G cell phone technology is tied to the COVID-19 virus. A March 2020 article, headlined “Former Vodafone Boss Turned Pastor: 5G Dangers That Cause Flu Symptoms Is ‘Largest Global Coverup In History,’” stated, “A video that has been circulating, in which a man who used to work for Vodafone and another cellular service years ago, but has become a pastor and is now in Africa, is stating that the flu-like symptoms that people are experiencing around the globe, which they are told is a virus but is actually cell poisoning that is a direct result of a global rollout of 5G technology, and manifesting itself as a virus.” The article provided no evidence to back the claims made in the video.

There is no evidence that health effects from the COVID-19 virus are connected to 5G, according to fact-checking articles published in 2020 by FullFact.org and Reuters. A March 2020 report from the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection, a Germany-based organization that studies the health effects of non-ionizing radiation such as radio waves, found no evidence that 5G exposure posed a risk to human health.

Site owner Tim Brown, in a June 2020 email to NewsGuard, disputed that these claims were false. “I cited the scientific papers, and since there are literally thousands of scientists and doctors who have petitioned to slow the rollout of 5G due to lack of testing, I guess that is upon you to disprove them with actual testing,” he said. (The article did not cite any scientific studies.)

A January 2020 article titled “Coincidence? US Patent For ‘An Attenuated Coronavirus’ Filed In 2015 Was Granted In 2018,” republished from EndoftheAmericanDream.com, suggested that a patent filed years before the pandemic broke out was connected to the COVID-19 virus. “This patent was filed by the Pirbright Institute, and ... some of the major backers of the Pirbright Institute include the World Health Organization, the European Commission, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,” the article stated. “Okay, that is more than just a little bit weird. Could it be possible that researchers at the biosafety-level-4 lab in Wuhan were studying this ‘attenuated coronavirus?’”

In fact, the patent referenced in the article has no connection to the COVID-19 virus. It is true that the U.K.-based Pirbright Institute has accepted funding from the Gates Foundation and holds a patent on a strain of coronavirus, but that strain only affects chickens, not humans. “Pirbright does not currently work with human coronaviruses,” the institute said in a January 2020 post on its website responding to the patent claims.

Asked about the article, Brown denied that the story actually connected the Pirbright Institute patent with the COVID-19 virus.

The site’s COVID-19 coverage has also included misleading and unsubstantiated claims about vaccines. For example, a June 2020 article, titled “Colorado: Bill Requires “Re-Education” For Parents Who Refuse Coronavirus Vaccine,” republished from the site SHTFPlan.com, referred to COVID-19 as a “plandemic” and a “scam.” Under the legislation discussed in the article, parents seeking a nonmedical exemption for

their children would be required to watch an online video about vaccine science from the state's public health department.

“What happens if the ‘re-education’ fails to convince a person to get the vaccines? It’s hard to say, but these types of concentration camps (and be honest with yourself, you know that’s what they are) should be condemned by anyone who wishes to be free. This is utterly insane. The limits the governments are now going to in order to force people to get vaccinated is unbelievable,” the article stated.

While the bill would toughen the state’s process for obtaining a nonmedical vaccine exemption — existing law requires only the submitting of a written statement to a school for a “personal belief” exemption — it would not eliminate nonmedical exemptions and “force people to get vaccinated,” as the site stated. Additionally, while the headline stated that the bill would apply to parents who refuse the “coronavirus vaccine,” the bill itself does not make any reference to COVID-19. Indeed, no vaccine for COVID-19 existed at the time the legislation was being considered. As of June 2020, the bill had passed both houses of the Colorado General Assembly and was expected to be signed into law by the governor.

Brown defended the article, saying that the education requirement in the Colorado legislation was “slanted towards the state's agenda for vaccination.”

A July 2019 article, headlined “Eugenics, Infertility & Population Growth CRISIS Part 4,” republished from the site CoreyDigs.com, made a false claim about the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. “There is a direct link between the HPV vaccine and infertility rates, and since 1991 the birth rate for teenagers has declined 67%,” the article stated.

The birth rate among teenagers did decrease by 67 percent between 1991 and 2016, according to a June 2017 report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, the article omitted the fact that the decline preceded the introduction of the HPV vaccine in the U.S., in 2006. While the CDC did

not provide an explanation for that decline, a study published in the American Journal of Public Health in 2007 suggested that it was due to increased use of contraceptives and decreased sexual activity among teens. Moreover, the CDC states on its website, “there are no data that suggest getting the HPV vaccine will have an effect on future fertility for women.”

Asked about this article, Brown stated: “I see, so if you don't mention every single thing that could be a part of a particular issue,” he said, “it's a ‘misleading health claim?’”

The site has also made false claims tied to the 2020 protests against police brutality in the U.S. In a June 2020 article titled “DNC Being Supported Through International Money Laundering Via BlackLivesMatter.Com,” the site claimed that money donated through BlackLivesMatter.com would go directly to the Democratic National Committee. “It now looks like BlackLivesMatter.com is nothing more than an international money laundering outlet for the Democrat National Committee,” the article stated. “In a recent report, donations, including international funding to BlackLivesMatter.com eventually end up in the hands of the DNC.”

The article based this claim on the fact that donations made through BlackLivesMatter.com are processed through ActBlue Charities, which is part of the ActBlue fundraising platform used by Democrats and liberal groups. However, donations are not redirected to the DNC, as the article claimed. “When you donate on an ActBlue or ActBlue Charities page, the donation is earmarked for the group listed on the form,” Caleb Cade, a spokesperson for ActBlue, told FactCheck.org in June 2020. “We pass along the contribution directly to the receiving campaign or entity. We do not choose the recipient of the contribution, the donor does.” In a June 2020 article by The Associated Press, the DNC said it only receives donations made through ActBlue if those contributions are explicitly made out for the DNC.

Brown disputed that the article was false. “As far as the documentation is concerned, it is clear the line the money goes. In fact, if money is going from BLM.com

and to ActBlue and ActBlue is contributing to campaigns, I really don't see how you can get around it. Most people can see through what you are shoveling here though.”

The Washington Standard has repeatedly promoted the theory that Democratic National Committee staffer Seth Rich was killed because he shared DNC emails with WikiLeaks. For example, in an August 2018 article headlined, “Did Julian Assange’s Mom Implicate Seth Rich In DNC Leak?,” site owner Brown wrote, “I’ll let the people be the judge of the facts, but all indicators point to the fact that Rich was the leaker and that he was murdered because of it.”

Similarly, a July 2018 article, titled “Seth Rich Murder Bombshell: Witness Prepared To Identify 2 Killers, BOTH Government Agents,” said of Rich, “He was almost surely the source of the DNC emails leak. And if he was, then that is more than enough reason for him to be silenced.”

There is no evidence that Rich leaked DNC emails to WikiLeaks. According to the April 2019 report from then U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller, Russian hackers were the source for the DNC files, and Rich had died four days before WikiLeaks received the emails. Washington police have said that Rich was killed during a robbery.

Articles on The Washington Standard have also promoted the debunked conspiracy theory, known as “Pizzagate,” that claims that Hillary Clinton and other top Democrats operated a pedophilia ring from a Washington pizza restaurant. “Without taking down the DC pedophile rings, the swamp will never be drained, and they will continue to corrupt the direction of this nation,” stated an April 2017 article, titled “With All The Pedophile Ring Arrests, #Pizzagate Deserves A Full Investigation,” which was republished from TheLastGreatStand.com.

Asked about the site’s coverage of the Seth Rich and Pizzagate conspiracies, Brown told NewsGuard in a February 2019 phone interview: “Sure, is there a question that should be asked over Seth Rich? Is there

a question that should be asked over Pizzagate? Of course there are questions, that's part of investigative journalism. Would you agree? Or do you think that journalists should just take what the state gives them and leave it at that?"

Because The Washington Standard has regularly promoted false claims and debunked or unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, NewsGuard has determined that the site has repeatedly published false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

Asked for comment about failing these criteria, Brown said in the June 2020 email, "NewsGuard's criteria? I was unaware that I answered to NewsGuard. I'm merely providing statements in the refutation of your claims without basis."

The Washington Standard does not post a corrections policy. NewsGuard found two corrections published in the year preceding its June 2020 review of the site. However, because the site has failed to correct numerous articles with known false claims, NewsGuard has determined that it does not have effective corrections practices.

"I don't have a specific policy, but if I see something wrong I don't have any problem correcting that," Brown told NewsGuard in a February 2019 phone interview.

The Washington Standard does not disclose its conservative political perspective. Some opinion content on the website is labeled "commentary" and published in a dedicated section. However, the site regularly includes opinion in news stories.

For example, a June 2020 article in the site's U.S. News section voiced support for a petition to recall Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz. "May God grant them favor and victory and then, maybe they'll take on the criminal attorney general and the mayor of Minneapolis as well," the article stated.

Another June 2020 article criticized Democratic Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's order to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. "If there is one

thing I despise, it's lying criminals in positions of authority who seek to remove the heritage of their sovereign states and then aim to engage in revisionist history regarding the War of Northern Aggression," the article stated. "Such a tyrant is none other than Virginia Governor Ralph Northam."

Because the site regularly includes opinion in news articles, advancing an agenda that it does not disclose, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Asked about the site's approach to opinion, Brown said in a February 2019 phone interview: "I mean, look, I don't even like considering myself a journalist. Some people have introduced me as unbiased journalism. No, all of us are biased. Every single person that writes anything is biased.... We have a bias as to our worldview, that's the issue.... Which one is more attuned to the law than the other? ... So when you say, well, you have a sort of conservative lean, well what does that mean? Does that mean I'm more towards the law or more away from it? ... I can point out in almost every single thing that's called progressive, it's progressing away from the law and towards socialism and communism. And which ultimately is totalitarianism."

Transparency

The About Us page names Brown as the site's owner and founder. Brown's biography on the site states that he is the site's editor, and articles by Brown link to the biography. The Contact page provides a general contact form.

Articles generally name the authors and provide biographical information about the writer at the bottom of the article. Content that has been republished from other sites typically credits the original publisher.

Advertising is distinguished from editorial content. A disclosure at the bottom of each page states that posts on The Washington Standard may contain affiliate links and that the site earns "a small commission from those links."

History

Brown founded The Washington Standard in 2013. The earliest posts are from 2015.

Correction: An earlier version of this Nutrition Label incorrectly stated when the site was launched. It was founded in 2013.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on June 18, 2020, with new examples of the site's content and new comments from owner Tim Brown. This label was previously updated, in February 2019, to reflect that the site added information about its ownership and to include comments from Brown.

Written by: [Melissa Goldin](#), [John Gregory](#)

Edited by: [Eric Effron](#), [Kendrick McDonald](#)

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

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