A website that has frequently promoted conspiracy theories and false information, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ownership or Financing

True Pundit does not disclose who owns or operates the site. BuzzFeed reported in August 2018 that the site is owned and operated by a Pennsylvania man named Michael Moore (not the U.S. filmmaker Michael Moore), who goes by the name “Thomas Paine” on TruePundit.com. Moore did not respond to BuzzFeed’s requests for comment but published a story on his website in August 2018 that confirmed his identity.

True Pundit Media LLC, a private company registered in Delaware, is listed as the recipient of payments made through the site’s PayPal account. The company is also listed as an author of a book, “Trumped Up: The Ultimate Guide to the Deep State’s Evidence of President Trump’s Russia Collusion.” The site’s Twitter account says that True Pundit “is a Philadelphia-based conservative news organization.”

The site carries advertisements and solicits donations through PayPal and Patreon. The site’s Sponsor page also links to a store called Liberty Outfitters, which sells t-shirts and hats with slogans such as “Trump 2020: Make Liberals Cry Again.”

Content

TruePundit.com focuses on U.S. news, particularly politics. Most of the site’s content consists of excerpts of articles published by other news organizations, such as Fox News and The Hill, as well as websites that NewsGuard has found to have repeatedly published false content, such as ZeroHedge.com and WayneDupree.com.

Content on the site is divided into sections such as Politics, Business, World, Technology, and Security. The site also publishes some original reporting, often labeled with the word “EXCLUSIVE” in the headline, as well as hosts Moore’s podcasts.

Score: 0/100

- Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)
- 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.
TruePundit.com has repeatedly promoted false claims and conspiracy theories, including in stories related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an April 2020 article titled “EXCLUSIVE: Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Drops New Bombshell — Bill Gates’ Coronavirus Vaccine Will Pay Out BILLIONS in Profits to Dr. Fauci’s Agency,” the site promoted an unsubstantiated conspiracy theory about Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). The article suggested that Fauci would personally profit from a COVID-19 virus vaccine being developed with support from Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates.

“That puts your government in bed with Big Pharma and Gates and could pay as much as 50 percent of the profits to the NIH, the parent agency that employs Dr. Anthony Fauci — who again — is lobbying for the vaccine,” the article said. “Does Fauci get a cut of the bounty too? Or has he already been cut in?”

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is indirectly funding NIAID’s work on a COVID-19 virus vaccine through its financial support of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a nonprofit that has committed funding to multiple COVID-19 vaccine candidates, fact-checking site PolitiFact reported in April 2020. There is no evidence, however, that Fauci himself would personally profit from a vaccine. NIAID’s work on a vaccine was developed with pharmaceutical company Moderna. PolitiFact found no record of a business relationship with Fauci and Moderna in the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission’s database.

A June 2020 article about Fauci, titled “COVER UP: Fauci Approved Chloroquine, Hydroxychloroquine 15 Years Ago to Cure Coronaviruses; “Nobody Needed to Die,”” promoted a false claim about Fauci and hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug that has been studied as a potential treatment for COVID-19.

The article, which was republished from the website OneNewsNow.com, based its headline on a 2005 study published in Virology Journal that concluded that a
similar anti-malaria drug, chloroquine, prevented the spread of a separate strain coronavirus that caused severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The study used cell cultures in a laboratory, not human subjects, but TruePundit.com presented the study’s results as proof that hydroxychloroquine had been proven to treat coronaviruses.

“This means, of course, that Dr. Fauci has known for 15 years that chloroquine and its (sic) even milder derivative hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) will not only treat a current case of coronavirus (‘therapeutic’) but prevent future cases (‘prophylactic’),” the article said. “So HCQ functions as both a cure and a vaccine. In other words, it’s a wonder drug for coronavirus.”

The claim that hydroxychloroquine can prevent future cases of COVID-19 is not supported by more recent evidence. A clinical trial involving 800 patients, published in the New England Journal of Medicine in June 2020, found that hydroxychloroquine did not prevent people who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus from being infected.

Despite the TruePundit.com article calling hydroxychloroquine a “wonder drug for coronavirus,” multiple randomized clinical trials have found that hydroxychloroquine failed to provide benefits to COVID-19 patients. For example, in June 2020, U. K. researchers ended the use of hydroxychloroquine in a large trial that had involved 4,600 patients. “We have concluded that there is no beneficial effect of hydroxychloroquine in patients hospitalised with COVID-19,” researchers Martin Landray and Peter Horby, who conducted the RECOVERY trial, said in a statement.

Another trial, involving 400 patients, conducted at the University of Minnesota, and published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, found that hydroxychloroquine did not decrease the severity of COVID-19 symptoms over 14 days any better than a placebo in patients who were not hospitalized.
In addition, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said at a July 2020 congressional hearing, “Any and all of the randomized, placebo-controlled trials — which is the gold standard of determining if something is effective — none of them have found any efficacy for hydroxychloroquine.”

The site also promoted false claims related to the 2020 protests in the U.S. against police brutality. A June 2020 article headlined “WATCH: Suspicious Mystery Grows Debating Obama’s Tweeted Photo of George Floyd NINE DAYS Before His Death,” reported that former U.S. President Barack Obama’s private foundation “seemingly and mysteriously posted a photo of George Floyd nine days before his death with the message: “This Is America.’”

The Obama Foundation did not post a photograph of George Floyd before his May 26, 2020, death in police custody, which sparked global protests against racism and police brutality. While users did note that a poster with Floyd’s image on it did briefly appear in an Obama Foundation tweet that was dated on May 17, 2020, the foundation’s website had merely updated an image that appears in all of its tweets, which linked to earlier posts, according to a fact-check article by The Associated Press.

The original May 17 tweet from the foundation had featured a different image, of President Obama in graduation robes giving a commencement address. The tweet was later updated and Floyd’s image, which the foundation posted after Floyd’s death, was removed. There is no evidence that the foundation knew of Floyd before his death.

Another June 2020 article, headlined “Yes, George Soros Sent Money to Fund the Riots—and So Did Taxpayers,” promoted the false claim that Soros, a liberal billionaire philanthropist, funded the protests over Floyd’s death through his Open Society Foundations. “It didn’t take long to reveal the financial ties to current riots and to show that OSF and George Soros directly support the movement today,” the article stated.
Soros’ foundation, in a June 2020 tweet, said, “We do not pay protesters. Neither does our founder George Soros.” In a June 2020 story, the fact-checking site PolitiFact said that it could find no evidence that Soros or the Open Society Foundations had donated to any group that financed protests in Minneapolis, where Floyd died.

During the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, TruePundit.com promoted several false and unsubstantiated claims about former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate. For example, a November 2016 article headlined “BREAKING BOMBSHELL: NYPD Blows Whistle on New Hillary Emails: Money Laundering, Sex Crimes with Children, Child Exploitation, Pay to Play, Perjury,” falsely claimed that the New York Police Department had evidence linking Clinton to sex crimes with minors and child exploitation. The article cited unnamed FBI and NYPD sources to back the claim.

A September 2016 article, headlined “NYPD: Hillary Clinton Was Wearing 'Invisible' Earpiece To Receive Stealth Coaching During Live NBC TV Town Hall,” also used unnamed NYPD sources. The article stated, “NYPD sources involved with the NBC forum’s security detail confirm Clinton was wearing an ‘inductive earpiece,’” the same technology employed by almost all lead Broadway actors to receive forgotten lines and stealth off-stage cues from directors.”

A September 2016 article from fact-checking website Snopes found no evidence from photographs of the NBC candidate forum that Clinton was wearing an earpiece during the event.

A June 2018 article, titled “FBI: Clinton Campaign Official Arrested On Child Rape Charges; Feds Cashing in on Weiner Laptop Intel?,” claimed that a man who “reportedly worked for Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign” was arrested on child sex abuse and child pornography charges. A photo published with the article appears to show the man, identified as 22-year-old Joel Davis, wearing a Clinton campaign button and standing in front of her campaign signs.
The article linked to a report in the Daily Mail newspaper that included the photo with a caption that said the image “suggest[ed] he had campaigned for the 2016 loser.” A Clinton spokesman told the AP in July 2018 that Clinton’s campaign never employed Davis. The AP analyzed newspaper, television, and news wire reports from 2012 to 2017, and concluded that he was never “referred to, cited or quoted as a member of the Clinton campaign team” during that time.

TruePundit.com does not articulate a policy on correcting errors and NewsGuard could not find any corrections.

TruePundit.com does not disclose any particular political perspective or label any articles as opinion. However, stories regularly include opinions that are critical of Democrats, liberals, and opponents of U.S. President Donald Trump.

For example, a May 2020 article titled “Democrats Are Actively Rooting For Economic Collapse” said, “Democrats are actively hoping for the economy to continue to collapse so that presumptive Democrat presidential nominee Joe Biden and beat President Donald Trump in November. The article added, “Democrats – who have led the charge forcing people to lose their jobs and plummet the country’s economy – were hoping the economic downturn would get them back into the White House.”

A February 2020 article, headlined “Report: Romney Admits He Gets Yelled at in Grocery Stores,” called Republican U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, who was the Republican Party’s presidential nominee in 2012, a “traitor.” Referring to reports that Romney was heckled in public, the article said, “But it was the part about Romney being yelled at in grocery stores and on airplanes that caught my eye and made me smile and get all warm and fuzzy feeling inside.”

Articles about the COVID-19 pandemic have also included opinion. In a May 2020 article titled “The Worldwide Lockdown May Be the Greatest Mistake in History,” the site said, “The forcible prevention of Americans from doing anything except what politicians
deem ‘essential’ has led to the worst economy in American history since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is panic and hysteria, not the coronavirus, that created this catastrophe. And the consequences in much of the world will be more horrible than in America.”

Because TruePundit.com does not disclose its conservative perspective and includes unlabeled opinion in news articles, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

NewsGuard did not receive a response to five messages sent through TruePundit.com’s contact form, including one sent in 2020, seeking comment on the site’s history of publishing false claims, its approach to corrections, and its lack of separation between news and opinion.

Transparency

TruePundit.com does not disclose its ownership. Articles generally do not credit their authors and no content creators and editors are identified on the site. The only contact information provided is a general contact form on the News Tips page.

Some advertisements on the site are not distinguishable from editorial content. Articles will feature embedded videos with titles such as “How Trump’s 2nd Term Could Destroy AOC” and “The Secret Behind ‘5G Cash,’” as well as online polls on U.S. politics with questions such as “Are you going to support Trump in 2020? (Free Gift For All Who Answer).” These videos and polls, which are credited to an advertising firm called LockerDome, are labeled “Promoted Content,” which does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for clearly labeling advertising.

History

The TruePundit.com domain name was created in 2016, and the site began publishing stories that same year. According to BuzzFeed, the site’s proprietor, Michael Moore, previously worked as a journalist at The Record, a New Jersey newspaper. BuzzFeed reported that Moore pleaded guilty to a count of copyright
infringement in 2013, stemming from a case in which he was alleged to have run two websites that sold pirated hockey DVDs and downloads. He was sentenced to one year of house arrest and three years of supervised release, according to Buzzfeed.

In December 2017, Democratic U.S. Reps. Jerrold Nadler and Elijah Cummings wrote Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein regarding the investigation of charges of FBI bias against Hillary Clinton, alleging that stories published by the “fringe conspiracy website ‘True Pundit’” may have been responsible for the FBI’s reopening of an investigation into Clinton’s emails a week before the November 2016 presidential election.

The letter also referred to an email forwarded by then-deputy FBI Director Andrew McCabe to then-FBI director James Comey in October 2016 about a True Pundit article concerning his wife, Jill, with the notation, “FYI. Heavyweight source.”

The Justice Department has not announced the results of an investigation with any definitive links between True Pundit, former or current government officials, and the FBI’s probe of Clinton’s emails.

Correction: An earlier version of this Nutrition Label misquoted a notation in a 2016 email sent by former deputy FBI Director Andrew McCabe to former FBI director James Comey. The notation said “FYI. Heavyweight source,” instead of “FBI. Heavyweight source.”

Editor’s Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on Aug. 18, 2020. It was previously updated on June 12, 2020, with new examples of the site’s content. Its rating was changed to reflect NewsGuard’s determination that the website does not meet NewsGuard’s standards for revealing who is in charge or for clearly labeling advertising. The criteria checklist has been updated accordingly.

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Edited by: Eric Effron, Amy Westfeldt
Content

https://twitter.com/true_pundit
The Hill article:
ZeroHedge article: https://truepundit.com/this-is-not-a-revolution-its-a-blueprint-for-locking-down-the-nation/
Wayne Dupree article: https://truepundit.com/report-romney-admits-he-gets-yelled-at-in-grocery-stores/
Original article: https://truepundit.com/exclusive-etsy-ceo-black-lives-matter-is-the-civil-rights-movement-of-our-time-pledges-1-million-slams-police/

Credibility

Fauci article:
https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/apr/15/facebook-posts/facebook-posts-falsely-claim-dr-fauci-has-millions/
https://www.who.int/blueprint/priority-diseases/key-action/Novel_Coronavirus_Landscape_nCoV_11April2020.PDF?ua=1
Chloroquine article: https://archive.vn/bgqJK
2005 study:
https://www.sciencealert.com/small-trial-found-antimalarial-is-not-effective-for-treating-coronavirus
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7102549/
https://virologyj.biomedcentral.com/about
https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-4207
Fauci comments: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDjVwXM8ESE
Obama Floyd tweet: https://archive.vn/bvr8F
https://apnews.com/afs:Content:8996695467
Soros funded protests: https://archive.vn/Ya6Ly
https://amp.jsonline.com/amp/5316822002
Hillary article #1:
Hillary article #2:
https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/hillary-clinton-secret-earpiece/
Hillary article #3: https://apnews.com/f092a52742404e97b11459fd6a063830
Orlando shooter:
News/opinion #1: https://archive.vn/yGqNa
News/opinion #2: https://archive.vn/4r9fX
News/opinion #3: https://archive.vn/SD24X
https://truepundit.com/republicans-see-massive-surge-in-female-candidates/
https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/debate-secret-hand-signals/
http://www.politifact.com/personalities/breitbart/statements/?list=speaker
https://truepundit.com/army-howitzer-has-covfefe-stamped-on-the-gun/