

ronpaulinstitute.org

The website for a nonprofit organization founded by former Republican congressman Ron Paul, that has repeatedly published false information, including about COVID-19.



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

Score: 20/100

Ownership or Financing

According to the website's Donations page, RonPaulInstitute.org is owned by the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, a project of the nonprofit Foundation for Rational Economics and Education, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit libertarian think tank based in Lake Jackson, Texas.

The organization reported \$872,510 in total revenue in its 2018 financial statement. Approximately 98 percent of this revenue came from grants and contributions, according to the financial statement.

RonPaulInstitute.org does not run advertisements.

Paul, who founded the Foundation for Rational Economics and Education in 1976, also serves as the institute's chairman. Paul is a physician who served as a Republican Texas congressman for approximately 23 years, beginning in 1976, and ran for president three times -- twice as a Republican and once as a Libertarian.

The institute has an advisory board, with members such as former Tennessee U.S. Rep. John Duncan Jr. and Fox News legal analyst Andrew Napolitano, according to the site's About Us page. The Academic Board includes professors from institutions including Loyola University and the Institute of Democracy and Cooperation, a think tank in Paris.

The Ron Paul Institute runs a variety of educational programs, according to the site's Programs page. For example, the Institute offers a Peace and Prosperity Summer School, a weeklong seminar for college students interested in politics, journalism, and foreign affairs. The Institute also hosts speakers and symposia that "tackle difficult and timely topics such as the

- ✗ 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.](#)

counter-productivity of US sanctions and the harm sanctions do to the US economy,” according to the Program page.

Content

RonPaulInstitute.org states on its About Us page that it aims “to educate and advocate for fundamental changes in our foreign and domestic policy.” The site says that it furthers Paul’s goals for promoting peaceful foreign relations and trade as well as the promotion of domestic civil liberties. According to the About Us page, the site aims to build a coalition of supporters through articles that expose threats to democracy.

The institute provides “timely news and provocative analysis” on the website, according to the About Us page. The site publishes original articles written by Paul, members of the institute’s academic and advisory boards, and other contributors. The site also regularly republishes articles from sources ranging from libertarian think tanks such as the American Institute for Economic Research, to news sites that NewsGuard has found to repeatedly publish false content, such as Zero Hedge and RT. At the bottom of a republished article, a note discloses that the story was “reprinted with permission” from other sites.

Content is sorted into sections such as NeoCon Watch, Peace and Prosperity, and Congress Alert. Articles report on topics such as government spending, international organizations such as the United Nations, and media bias.

Articles often advocate for increased personal liberties and a smaller federal government. Typical headlines include “Can California Be Saved from Its Politicians?” “The Second Act Will Be Worse Than the First: Lockdowns Are Not the Answer” and “Alliance of Liberals, Neocons Set to Shape US Foreign Policy.”

The site also publishes videos from “Ron Paul Liberty Report,” a talk show that Paul co-hosts and livestreams on YouTube on weekdays. Paul’s guests on the show have included former Director of the Office of

Management and Budget David Stockman, and former congresswoman and 2020 Democratic presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard.

Credibility

RonPaulInstitute.org frequently publishes false information and conspiracy theories, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, an August 2020 article, headlined, "Big Pharma, Government, and The Media Are Blocking Coronavirus Treatments. Why?," the site falsely promoted the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine as a proven cure for COVID-19. The article stated that "a growing body of evidence suggests that a simple cocktail of hydroxychloroquine, zinc, and azithromycin is proving a very effective treatment for early onset of Covid-19. This is being reported by numerous doctors in the trenches treating patients every day. Most patients appear to respond quickly and often are symptom free in 72 hours."

The article's claim is not backed by evidence from clinical trials. "There is no evidence done in a rigorous study that shows hydroxychloroquine in combination with azithromycin or zinc or whatever combination you use that has any benefit in the treatment of coronavirus to date," Dr. Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar who specializes in infectious diseases at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told The Associated Press in July 2020.

The RonPaulInstitute.org article failed to mention evidence from multiple randomized clinical trials that have found that hydroxychloroquine failed to provide benefits to COVID-19 patients. For example, a trial involving 665 patients, published in the New England Journal of Medicine in July 2020, found, "Among patients hospitalized with mild-to-moderate Covid-19, the use of hydroxychloroquine, alone or with azithromycin, did not improve clinical status at 15 days as compared with standard care."

Another trial involving 400 patients, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine in July 2020, 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.”

An August 2020 article claimed that “the Centers for Disease Control dropped a bombshell report on coronavirus/Covid deaths: of the approximately 165,000 ‘Covid deaths’ less than ten thousand died from Covid. The rest - a vast majority - had on average 2.6 serious additional diseases, with the addition in most cases of extreme advanced age.”

The story was based on a Aug. 26, 2020, report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. based on data from death certificates. The report did state that “For 6% of the deaths, COVID-19 was the only cause mentioned. For deaths with conditions or causes in addition to COVID-19, on average, there were 2.6 additional conditions or causes per death.”

However, this does not mean that “of the approximately 165,000 ‘Covid deaths’ less than ten thousand died from Covid,” as the RonPaullInstitute.org article claimed. The cause of death section on a death certificate, under CDC guidelines last revised in 2003, contains two parts. Part I lists the chain of events that led directly to the death, including the underlying cause that initiated those events, while Part II contains other significant conditions that contributed to the death, but did not result in the underlying cause.

In 92 percent of all deaths that mentioned COVID-19, that disease is listed as the underlying cause of death, Jeff Lancashire, spokesman for the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics, told FactCheck.org in a September 2020 article.

Fauci addressed this claim in an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America" in September 2020. The CDC data "does not mean that someone who has hypertension or diabetes who dies of COVID didn't die of COVID-19. They did," Fauci said. "So the numbers that you've been hearing, the 180,000-plus deaths, are real deaths from COVID-19. Let there not be any confusion about that."

A July 2020 article headlined "Citizens Forced to Breathe Deadly Climate Change Gas," falsely stated that wearing a mask to decrease the spread of the COVID-19 virus can lead to dangerously low levels of oxygen. The article, which was originally published on RonPaulInstitute.org, falsely claimed that "wearing a face mask has been shown to reduce the amount of oxygen in the bloodstream to 17.5 percent which over time can lead to hypoxia or lack of adequate oxygen to function normally. Headaches, foggy thinking and lethargy are common byproducts."

The article also falsely claimed that wearing a mask dangerously increases the amount of carbon dioxide that people inhale, stating that the "typical CO₂ in the air is about 400 ppm, a little higher than that around the nose or mouth as we breathe. But a typical mask can drive the level up to a dangerous 5,000 ppm!"

Wearing a face mask will not reduce a person's oxygen supply or cause an accumulation of carbon dioxide, as illustrated by health care workers who regularly wear face masks for long periods of time without experiencing those effects. According to a May 2020 article from health fact-checking website HealthFeedback.org, even surgical and N95 masks used by health care workers are porous enough to allow gas molecules such as carbon dioxide and oxygen to pass through, while limiting exposure to the respiratory droplets that could spread the COVID-19 virus. Cloth masks recommended for use by the general public have a looser fit than masks used in health care settings, HealthFeedback.org reported, making them even less likely to result in low oxygen levels or carbon dioxide accumulation.

In a March 2020 column by Paul titled “The Coronavirus Hoax,” Paul made the unsubstantiated claim Dr. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, “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 the COVID-19 virus 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.

Rich, a data analyst for the DNC, was fatally shot on July 10, 2016, on a Washington street. While his murder remains unsolved, Washington’s Metropolitan Police Department has said that Rich was killed as a result of a botched robbery. Metropolitan Police Department spokesperson Alice Kim said a month after Rich’s death, “there is no indication that Seth Rich’s death is connected to his employment at the DNC.”

FactCheck.org consulted police records and statements of Rich’s family members made to the media to conclude that there was no evidence that Rich had leaked the DNC emails to WikiLeaks or that Democratic operatives had any part in his death.

U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller concluded in his 2019 report about Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election that Rich was not the source of the

DNC email leak to WikiLeaks. The Mueller Report found that Russian hackers had been responsible for the leak.

In addition to false headlines cited in some of the stories above, the website has published other deceptive and misleading headlines. For example, an October 2019 article titled “Lindsey Graham: ‘Steal Syria's Oil to Pay for US Occupation!’” misrepresented remarks by U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham in a dispute with the Trump administration about whether U.S. troops should remain in Syria. The article quoted Graham as saying, “by increasing the production of the oil fields, we will be helping our Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) allies who fought bravely to destroy ISIS Caliphate. We can use some of the revenues from future Syrian oil sales to pay our military commitment in Syria.” Graham did not, as the headline suggests, say that the United States or anyone should steal Syrian oil.

Because the Ron Paul Institute has published false and misleading claims in articles and headlines, NewsGuard has determined the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The site does not publish a corrections policy, and NewsGuard could find no evidence of corrections online.

The Ron Paul Institute did not respond to three emails to a general email address on its Contact Us page, about the site’s false claims and lack of corrections.

The About Us page on RonPaullInstitute.org makes the views of Paul and the Institute clear, saying the institute “continues and expands Dr. Paul’s lifetime of public advocacy for a peaceful foreign policy and the protection of civil liberties at home.” The page also describes the website’s content as articles that “bring to life the latest threats to our liberties at home and abroad.”

The website does not label any content as news or opinion, other than Paul’s weekly column. Because the website’s content reflects the views described on its About Us page, and because content is not labeled

as news, NewsGuard has determined that RonPaullInstitute.org does not handle the difference between news and opinion irresponsibly.

Transparency

The About Us page discloses ownership by the Foundation for Rational Economics and Education and identifies Ron Paul as its founder. However, because the website does not identify any of its major donors, RonPaullInstitute.org does not meet NewsGuard's standard for revealing ownership and financing.

The website names its advisory board and academic board members, and provides a biography for Paul and the institute's executive director. However, it does not make clear who is in charge of producing or editing content on the website, which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for revealing who is in charge.

Articles on RonPaullInstitute.org are generally attributed to authors, and the website publishes a list of all of its contributing writers, including writers for other publications whose work was republished. However, no contact or biographical information is provided for them, which does not meet NewsGuard's criteria for providing information about content creators.

Three NewsGuard emails to RonPaullInstitute.org's general address, seeking comment about the website's lack of information about major donors, content creators, and editorial leaders, did not receive a response.

The site does not run advertisements.

History

Ron Paul created the Foundation for Rational Economics and Education in 1976, according to business records.

Paul, an obstetrician, served as a Republican Texas congressman in the 22nd district from 1976-1977 and from 1979 to 1985; and in Texas' 14th district from 1997 to 2013. He ran for president as a Libertarian candidate in 1988, losing to Republican George H.W. Bush. He ran for president as a Republican in 2008 and 2012,

losing to the party's eventual nominees, U.S. Sen. John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012. Ron Paul's son is U.S. Sen. Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican.

RonPaulInstitute.org launched in March 2012.

Written by: [Carly Wanna](#)

Edited by: [John Gregory](#), [Amy Westfeldt](#)

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

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