

americanactionnews.com

A conservative site owned by a company that provides email lists to Republican political action committees and candidates. American Action News has published unsubstantiated claims, including about COVID-19.



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

Score: 39.5/100

Ownership and Financing

American Action News does not disclose its ownership to users. However, marketing company American Media Source, LLC says on its corporate website that it owns the website, along with other conservative sites including TrumpTrainNews.com, ForLiberty.News, and The HollywoodConservative.us. American Media Source's website states that the company's CEO is David M. Keene, the son of Republican political consultant and former National Rifle Association president, David A. Keene.

American Media Source, based in Alexandria, Va., also does business as Political List Brokers, and separately provides email lists to Republican political action committees, according to an August 2020 article in The Daily Beast.. The company says on its site's Advertise page: "We publish and share news and content across multiple media properties, giving your cause, candidate, or campaign the ability to reach the right people at the right time. Email, display targeting, postal, SMS, phone – let us know what channel you'd like to use, and reach engaged American donors and activists – FAST."

The website provides readers with no disclosure of this commercial relationship.

OpenSecrets.org — the website of the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization — states that, in the 2020 election cycle Political List Brokers received payments from PACs and election committees including Committee to Defend the President (\$3,037), Laura Loomer for Congress (\$2,177), and Stop the AOC PAC (\$850).

- ✓ 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.](#)

The Daily Beast, citing emails that it obtained, reported that American Media Source's clients in 2020 include "the Trump Make America Great Again Committee, a joint fundraising committee benefitting the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee, as well as the National Republican Congressional Committee. Both have sent fundraising emails through lists associated with American Action News and another of AMS's news properties called GOP Presidential."

American Action News runs advertisements. Services offered by American Media Source on its website include sponsored articles and email, phone, postal, and SMS list rentals. Articles on American Action News frequently end with a paid link to the website of a political action committee or Republican candidate.

NewsGuard sent two emails each to American Action News and American Media Source in October 2020 asking about the company's business with political action committees, but did not receive a reply. A telephone message left with Keene was also not returned.

Content

American Action News covers U.S. politics from a strongly conservative perspective. Content is divided into sections including Foreign Affairs, Government, Guns, Military, Media, and Politics.

American Action News publishes some original videos, including commentary by Amanda Head of the American Media Source-owned site The Hollywood Conservative. The site also publishes interviews by Keene of conservative figures such as journalist Clifford May.

Typical headlines have included "Fox News Bans Frequent Pro-Trump Guest," "Martin Luther King Jr.'s Niece Rips Biden's Record on Racial Justice," and "BLM's Anti-Police Chaos Adds Fuel To Anarchist Terror Threat."

Credibility

Articles on American Action News are typically based on the reporting of conservative outlets, and most

frequently cite The Daily Wire, Fox News, and The Daily Caller, as well as the Washington Free Beacon.

American Action News has promoted false claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in September 2020, the site published an article titled “Chinese Virologist Tells Tucker Carlson That China Released Covid-19 on Purpose.”

The article reported unsubstantiated claims by Dr. Li-Meng Yan, a Chinese virologist who stated that the COVID-19 virus is manmade. The article cited quotes from Yan’s interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson, saying that the virus “actually is not from nature. It is a manmade virus created in the lab.” Asked by Carlson, “You’re saying the Chinese government manufactured this virus?”, Yan replied “Yes, exactly.”

While the American Action News accurately quoted Yan and Carlson, it failed to report that an abundance of scientific evidence and published research had concluded, as of September 2020, that the virus most likely has natural origins.

A study published in the journal Nature in February 2020 found the new virus’s genome is “96 percent identical” to a bat coronavirus. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” In an April 2020 statement, the U.S. intelligence community said it “concurs with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified.”

The American Action News article referred to a published paper by Yan that she said supported her claim. The paper, which was not peer-reviewed, has been widely criticized. Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Health Security published an unofficial peer-review of the paper in September 2020, which stated that Yan “offers contradictory and inaccurate information that does not support their argument.” Carl T. Bergstrom, a biologist at the University of Washington, described the paper’s claims as “unfounded” and David Robertson, a viral genomics researcher at University of Glasgow, told National

Geographic that “This paper just cherry-picked a couple of examples, excluded evidence, and came up with a ridiculous scenario.”

In September 2020, American Action News published an article titled "Riots Poised to Be Most Expensive Insurance Incident Ever." The article stated, “Analysts predict the riots in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death may cost insurance companies \$2 billion. If those estimates come true, that would make the ongoing unrest in major metropolitan areas the costliest incident in insurance history.”

There have been multiple events that have cost insurers more than \$2 billion. Although estimates vary, Hurricane Katrina is often cited as the most expensive event in insurance history. The Insurance Information Institute says in an April 2020 report on its website that the hurricane resulted in \$41.1 billion in insured losses, or \$52.8 billion in 2019 dollars. The U.S. Office for Coastal Management says on its website that Hurricane Sandy "caused \$18.75 billion in insured property losses, excluding flood insurance claims. Estimates of insured losses for Hurricane Matthew (2016) range from \$1.5 billion to \$7 billion in the U.S."

American Action News cited excerpts of a Daily Wire story on the insurance estimate, and the Daily Wire cited a story published by the website Axios.com. However, the September 2020 Axios.com story noted that the insurance industry had classified the demonstrations following Floyd’s death as more costly to the industry than any other civil rights demonstration, defined as a “civil disorder.” The Daily Wire and the American Action News story did not make that distinction.

A September 2019 American Action News article, titled “Facebook Shadow Bans Major Pro-Life Group as Fake News,” promoted the inaccurate claim that abortion is never medically necessary. The article reported that Facebook had reduced the distribution of two anti-abortion videos published by the group Live Action, which had also advanced claims that abortion is not medically necessary. The American Action News article said, “Many obstetricians, gynecologists and other

medical professions testify abortion is never medically necessary. One of the 'false' videos featured testimony by neonatologist Dr. Kendra Kolb.”

There are several circumstances under which abortion can be medically necessary. For example, in the case of an ectopic pregnancy, as described by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the embryo implants outside the uterus, can not be moved, and is nonviable; allowing the pregnancy to continue would endanger the life of the mother, and abortion is considered medically necessary. “If the ectopic pregnancy has ruptured a tube, emergency surgery is needed. Sometimes surgery is needed even if the fallopian tube has not ruptured,” ACOG states on its website. “In these cases, the ectopic pregnancy can be removed from the tube, or the entire tube with the pregnancy can be removed.”

The Kaiser Family Foundation published a report on late-term abortions in December 2019, which named as reasons for them “Life threatening conditions” such as “early severe preeclampsia, newly diagnosed cancer requiring prompt treatment, and intrauterine infection (chorioamnionitis) often in conjunction with premature rupture of the amniotic sac (PPROM).” KFF states that “If these conditions arise before the fetus is viable, the pregnant individual may pursue termination of pregnancy to preserve their own health.”

In a September 2019 post on its site, ACOG released a joint statement with Physicians for Reproductive Health which read, in part, “As physicians, we are focused on protecting the health and lives of the patients for whom we provide care. Without question, abortion can be medically necessary.”

In a June 2018 article headlined “Jackie Kennedy Always Thought THIS Dem Ordered Her Husband’s Assassination,” American Action News falsely reported that the widow of U.S. President John F. Kennedy believed that Kennedy’s successor, former Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, ordered the Kennedy assassination.

The article, which republished excerpts of an article from IrishCentral.com, claimed that “Unsealed tapes finally made public reveal that till her dying day, Jackie Kennedy believed her husband’s vice president and successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, planned the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.”

IrishCentral.com based its claim on a 2011 article from the UK’s Daily Mail, which reported that recordings would soon be released revealing Johnson was involved in the assassination of JFK.

Audiotaped interviews between Kennedy and historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., released by the Kennedy family later in 2011, did quote Jackie Kennedy as saying that her husband had feared that Johnson would not be a good president if Kennedy died. "Bobby [Kennedy, John F. Kennedy’s brother] told me this later, and I know Jack said it to me sometimes. He said, 'Oh, God, can you ever imagine what would happen to the country if Lyndon was president?'" Jackie Kennedy told Schlesinger in 1964, according to the recordings.

However, the tapes did not reveal that Jackie Kennedy blamed Johnson for her husband’s death. No evidence has emerged to suggest that Johnson had any role in planning the Kennedy assassination.

Because American Action News has promoted false claims and conspiracy theories, NewsGuard has determined that the website fails to gather and present news responsibly.

American Action News does not feature a corrections policy and NewsGuard found no published corrections.

American Action News discloses on its About page that “we are dedicated to bringing our readers hard-hitting news and stories and analysis from a conservative viewpoint.” Although the site features a dedicated Opinion section, opinionated content regularly appears outside that section.

For example, a September 2020 article that was published in the site’s Government section, and was also labeled Top News, was headlined “It Just Got Real:

Barr Tells Prosecutors to Charge Rioters With Sedition.”

The article said, “Playtime is over for the spoiled brats of Antifa.”

The article also said that liberal activists “have carried out a national wave of carefully planned, coordinated, and funded attacks since the May death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police,” adding, “Using Floyd’s death as the fuse, liberals have used rioting, arson, shootings, and literal bomb attacks to try and destabilize the United States ahead of the November 3 election.”

An October 2020 article, also published in the Government section and labeled as Top News, was titled “The Only Members of Congress Who Voted Against Pelosi’s Disingenuous Resolution.” The author wrote, “Five Congress members, all Republicans, voted against a (disingenuous) resolution committing to a peaceful transfer of power following the election. They correctly argue the resolution is a nakedly political statement meant to diminish President Trump and disguise the fact that some Democrats — like Hillary Clinton — are acting as if they’ll refuse to accept any results short of a Biden landslide.”

A September 2020 article that appeared in the site’s Politics section, “Joe Biden to Face Defamation Suit After Calling Rittenhouse a ‘White Supremacist’,” began with the assertion, “It’s time for Joe Biden to retract his statements defaming 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse, calling him a ‘white supremacist.’”

Because American Action News published unlabeled opinion content in stories that report news and are labeled news, politics, or government, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not responsibly separate news from opinion.

American Action News did not respond to four NewsGuard emails, including two in October 2020, seeking comment on the website’s promotion of inaccurate and unsubstantiated claims, mixing of news and opinion, and lack of corrections. Two emails sent

through American Media Source’s website inquiry form in October 2020, and a telephone message left with the company CEO, David Keene, were also not returned.

Although the website has published some headlines that make false and unsubstantiated claims, such as the 2018 article that alleged Lyndon B. Johnson planned the Kennedy assassination, NewsGuard found that the majority of headlines reflected articles’ content and did not make false claims. Therefore, NewsGuard has determined that the website does not fail to meet NewsGuard’s standard for avoiding deceptive headlines.

NewsGuard assessed American Action News’ coverage of the PACs and political figures which had used American Media Source’s services during the 2020 election cycle, and found few cases in which the site had reported on its customers. Articles that did feature messages from the political action committees that have paid the site’s owner were labeled “Advertisement.”

Transparency

American Action News does not identify its ownership or editorial leadership. Most articles are credited simply to “AAN Staff,” and no staff page appears to exist. The website features a contact page, which lists a street address and a general contact email address.

American Action News did not respond to four NewsGuard emails, including two in October 2020, seeking comment on the website’s failure to identify its owners, editors, or content creators. Two emails sent through American Media Source’s website inquiry form in October 2020, and a telephone message left with the company CEO, David Keene, were also not returned.

Display advertisements on the website are generally labeled “Sponsored.”

Articles typically end with a link, labeled “Advertisement,” which leads to the website for a political action committee or candidate. For example, one October 2020 article, “Hillary’s Former Spokeswoman Has a Wish for Trump,” ended with the statement “Send a Personal Get Well Message to

President Trump & the First Lady.” Users who click on the statement are redirected to a page on the website of the Committee to Defend the President PAC, which invited readers to submit a get well soon message to Trump, along with their contact details.

History

Website registration records indicate that AmericanActionNews.com was registered in 2013. BuzzFeed News reported in 2016 that “Domain ownership records list American Action News LLC as the registrant and administrative contact of AmericanActionNews.com, and Virginia corporate records list Dan Backer as the registered agent for American Action News LLC.”

Backer is a Washington lawyer and conservative activist who has represented several political action committees, according to a BuzzFeed article from 2017. Backer told BuzzFeed in 2017 that, although he helped set up American Action News, he sold the outlet in 2014. He would not disclose to BuzzFeed to whom he had sold the outlet.

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

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Ownership

Date of formation

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