



Pennsylvania News Trust Report

March 15, 2021



INTRODUCTION

Local journalism faces a wide range of threats in 2021—from a disrupted business model to competition from monopolistic technology platforms to industry-wide battles over consolidation and ownership. To address these existential threats, the industry—with encouragement and support from nonprofit groups like The Lenfest Institute—is working hard to come up with solutions.

But even as publishers work to overcome these challenges, local journalism may face an even more severe long-term imperative: Preserving trust from readers. Americans trust local news substantially more than national news sources, according to data from [the Knight Foundation](#), the [World Economic Forum](#), and the [Pew Research Center](#). But a variety of mis- and disinformation forces are simultaneously exploiting and undermining that trust. Moreover, as trustworthy media sources struggle to compete digitally, many of the practices that built deep trust in media over decades in print, television and radio formats may not transfer easily to digital formats without a specific effort to do so.

In this **Pennsylvania Media Trust Report**, we examine the issue of trust and integrity for media coverage in and about Pennsylvania. The report utilizes trust ratings and reporting from [NewsGuard](#), data about social media engagement from [NewsWhip](#), and resources collated from NewsGuard, The Lenfest Institute, and other organizations to answer three key questions:

- What is the current state of media trust as it relates to publications in Pennsylvania or covering Pennsylvania news?
- What are the major threats to trust in local news in Pennsylvania?
- What can Pennsylvania publishers do to improve trust among readers, viewers, or listeners?

This report was prepared by NewsGuard, a company that deploys journalists to rate the credibility and transparency practices of thousands of news organizations worldwide, flagging misinformation sources and narratives in the process. The report was produced with funding from and in partnership with The Lenfest Institute.

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NEWSGUARD OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

This report draws heavily on reporting and data from NewsGuard. In this section of the report, we provide background on NewsGuard and its methodology for assessing the reliability of news and information sources.

NewsGuard was founded in 2018 with the mission of restoring trust and accountability to news. Its cofounders are award-winning journalist and media entrepreneur Steven Brill—who founded CourtTV, The American Lawyer, and other successful ventures—and Gordon Crovitz, former publisher of the Wall Street Journal.

NewsGuard deploys a team of journalists from diverse journalistic backgrounds to rate the credibility and transparency of news and information websites in the U.S. and Europe. Each website is assessed based on the same [nine simple, apolitical journalistic criteria](#) for credibility and transparency. Based on the nine criteria, NewsGuard’s team of journalists produces trust ratings, 0-100 point trust scores, and detailed “Nutrition Labels” for each site.

Ratings, trust scores, and Nutrition Labels from NewsGuard are available to consumers through a browser extension and mobile app aimed at promoting news and media literacy skills. NewsGuard’s tools are used by hundreds of public libraries and is available to millions of students and educators through a partnership with Turnitin.

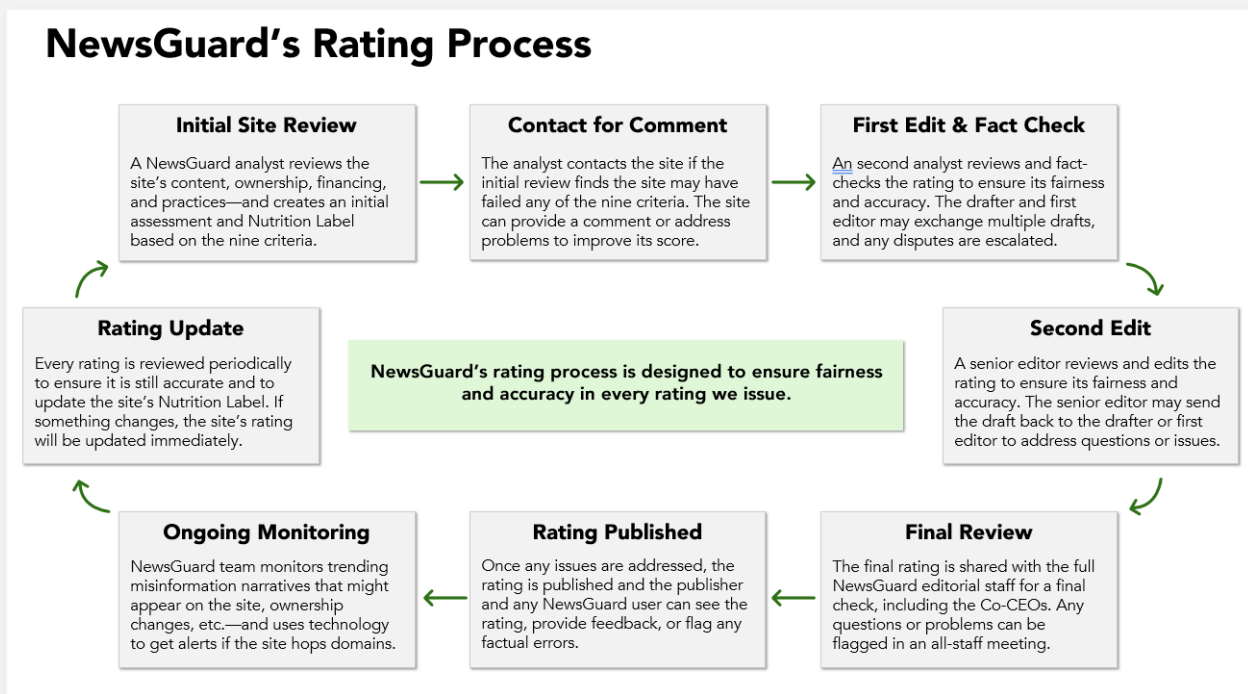
Editors at NewsGuard include former top editors at Reuters, the Associated Press, and the Chicago Tribune—and at any given time, NewsGuard’s team includes ~50 journalists and freelancers across the U.S. and Europe. NewsGuard has rated all of the news and information websites that account for 95% of online engagement with news in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany and Italy—and partners with government agencies and nonprofits, including the World Health Organization, the U.S. Department of State, and the British Parliament to provide reports on threats from mis- and disinformation.

NewsGuard’s Nine Criteria & Rating Process

Each of the sites NewsGuard rates are based on the same nine basic, apolitical criteria of journalistic practice:

CREDIBILITY	TRANSPARENCY
✓ Does not repeatedly publish false content	✓ Website discloses ownership and financing
✓ Gathers and presents information responsibly	✓ Clearly labels advertising
✓ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors	✓ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest
✓ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly	✓ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information
✓ Avoids deceptive headlines	

Ratings are produced using a rigorous vetting process that involves reviews by multiple trained analysts and senior editors—and are continuously updated to ensure accuracy after the site has received its initial rating.



Based on the site's performance on the nine criteria, the site receives an overall trust score of 0-100 points. A site with a score of 60 or above receives a **GREEN** rating, meaning it is generally reliable. A site with a score below 60 receives a **RED** rating, meaning it is generally untrustworthy.

NewsGuard Ratings



Green (Trustworthy): The site generally adheres to basic journalistic standards for credibility and transparency.



Red (Untrustworthy): The site does not generally adhere to basic journalistic standards for credibility and transparency.

TRUST BREAKDOWN: PENNSYLVANIA NEWS OUTLETS

To understand the threats to trust in Pennsylvania news, we assessed the credibility and transparency practices of news organizations based in and covering Pennsylvania.

News publishers based in Pennsylvania:

We analyzed trust rating data from NewsGuard for a group of 160 local news sites based in Pennsylvania. The sources analyzed included local newspapers, local TV news outlets, local radio stations, and digital-only sources based in the commonwealth.

Key Finding: Most Pennsylvania-based news outlets are highly credible.

Our analysis found that 70% of the Pennsylvania-based news outlets we analyzed were highly credible, adhering strongly to the nine journalistic criteria we analyzed.

On average, these sites received a NewsGuard trust score of 93.4 out of 100 points. A site needs only to score 60 points or more to be considered generally trustworthy—suggesting that not only are most Pennsylvania-based outlets trustworthy, but that those that are trustworthy tend to be highly trustworthy.

93.4

Average NewsGuard Trust Score
among generally credible news
sources based in Pennsylvania

Key Finding: Opportunities for Pennsylvania publishers to build trust through improvements to transparency practices.

A more granular analysis of the data shows that the sites analyzed tend not to repeatedly publish clearly and egregiously false stories. In other words, while there are news sites based in Pennsylvania that have significant trust issues, they tend not to blatantly make things up:

Criterion	Percent of Sites Passing Criterion
Does not repeatedly publish false content	99.38%
Gathers and presents information responsibly	70.00%
Regularly corrects or clarifies errors	56.88%
Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly	69.81%
Avoids deceptive headlines	99.38%
Website discloses ownership and financing	45.00%
Clearly labels advertising	68.79%
Reveals who's in charge, including possible conflicts of interest	61.25%
The site provides the names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information	63.75%

But the criteria results did highlight several other issues that could stand to reduce readers' trust in Pennsylvania-based news sources.

For example, 30%—roughly the proportion of publishers who were rated as overall unreliable—fail to separate news and opinion responsibly or to present information fairly and responsibly. As we will discuss in the next section, publishers failing to meet these criteria mainly consist of outlets with undisclosed partisan funding and agendas.

Even among the sites that are generally credible, the data shows some issues with transparency and disclosure practices that could undermine reader trust. For example, 54% of the publishers in the sample set do not have clear and consistently enforced policies for transparently correcting reporting errors when they are made; 36% of the publishers in the sample set do not provide detailed information about content creators (such as a biography or contact information); and 39% did not have clear disclosure of who oversees editorial content, including naming any potential conflicts of interest. We will discuss best practices for disclosure and transparency in the Trust Toolkit section.

Key Finding: Networks of partisan-funded local news sources threaten to erode trust in local news in Pennsylvania.

The data showed that 70% of the Pennsylvania-based local news sites we analyzed were generally credible. But what about the other 30%?

Our analysis found the presence of a significant number of websites designed to look and feel like local newspaper websites—but which have undisclosed, politically partisan funding sources, conflicts of interest, and highly slanted coverage.

These sites have names like Crawford Times, Bucks County News, or Keystone Today—and their websites are indistinguishable from typical local news sites. Research has found that readers disproportionately trust local news sources—a factor these sites simultaneously exploit and undermine.

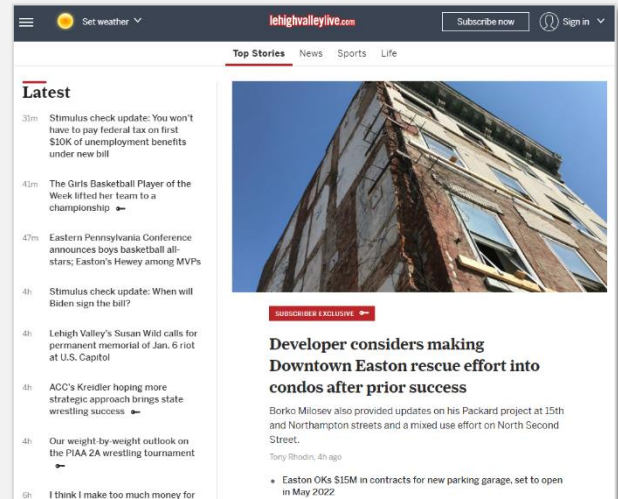
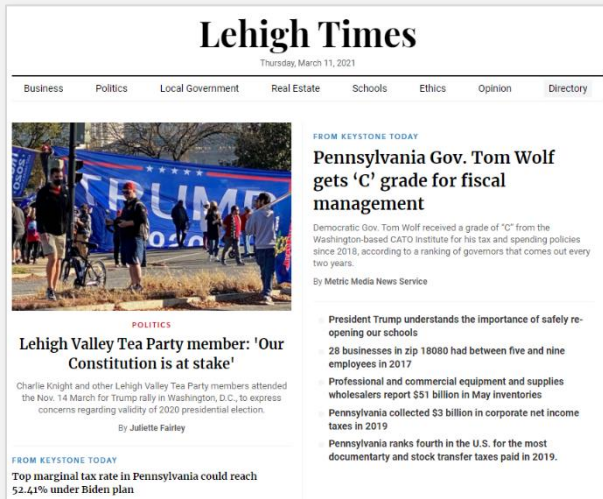
We found the presence of websites from three separate groups with undisclosed partisan funding and agendas—whose coverage, in all cases, strongly favored the political party of their partisan funders. The sites spanned the political spectrum, with examples from both left-leaning and right-leaning organizations..

Examples of such sites are described below.

Example: Metric Media Network

A news reader in the Lehigh Valley area looking for quality news coverage from a local source might reasonably expect to find it on websites like LehighTimes.com or LehighValleyLive.com. At first glance, both sites appear to be typical local newspaper sites.

Opening the home page of either site brings up a standard-looking news outlet with coverage of politics, local business, and other topics. On the surface, the sites are hard to distinguish:




But when it comes to trust, there is a big difference between Lehigh Times and Lehigh Valley Live. LehighValleyLive.com is the website of the *The Express-Times*, a newspaper in Easton, PA that has been covering local news in the area since 1855. It gets a 100-point trust score from NewsGuard, adhering to all nine of the criteria we use to assess credibility and transparency.

LehighTimes.com, on the other hand, is part of Metric Media, a network of nearly 1,300 websites nationwide that present themselves as generic local news outlets—but which actually are run by a conservative political consultant and have been found to publish “coverage that is ordered up by Republican groups and corporate PR firms,” according to [The New York Times](#).










NewsGuard’s review of the network found the sites frequently publish news with a conservative slant—attacking Democratic politicians and writing positive pieces about Republican ones. For example, while the Lehigh Times’ “About

Metric Media**NewsGuard**

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

A network of websites that falsely present themselves as locally based news sites. The sites do not disclose their conservative agenda, and much of the content is created by algorithms.

Score: 32/100[See the full Nutrition Label →](#)

CREDIBILITY	TRANSPARENCY
 Does not repeatedly publish false content	 Website discloses ownership and financing
 Gathers and presents information responsibly	 Clearly labels advertising
 Regularly corrects or clarifies errors	 Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest
 Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly	 The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information
 Avoids deceptive headlines	

NewsGuard Nutrition Label: Metric Media

Us” page says the site was created “to fill the void in community news after years of decline in local reporting” and that its approach is to “provide objective, data-driven information without political bias,” a review of the site’s content on March 11, 2021 told a different story.

The top story on the site featured a large picture of a Trump 2020 banner with quotes from a local Tea Party member. Another gave Democratic Governor Tom Wolf a “C” grade for his fiscal management. And another claimed that President Joe Biden’s policies had raised the highest marginal tax rate to 52.4%.

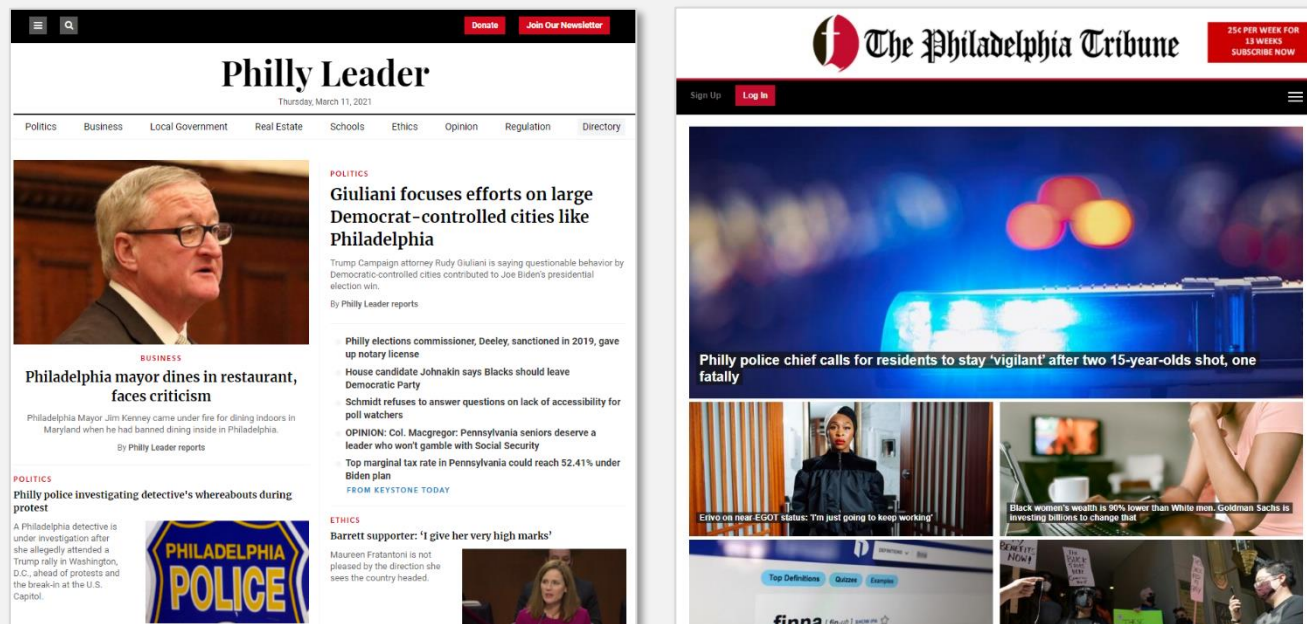
NewsGuard’s review of the network found numerous examples of the sites promoting an undisclosed agenda. In one case, the network published a series of stories about the negative impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the hotel industry—without disclosing that Metric Media’s CEO, Bradley Cameron, was retained “by US-based hotel owners to assist their recovery plans as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,” according to a biography page on the website of Cameron’s consulting business.

The New York Times described Metric Media largely as a PR and marketing company masquerading as local news, reporting that, “behind the scenes, many of the stories are directed by political groups and corporate P.R. firms to promote a Republican candidate or a company, or to smear their rivals.” In Pennsylvania, Metric Media operates 45 different websites of this kind:

altoonatimes.com	keystonetoday.com	nwpanews.com
beaverconews.com	laurelhighlandstoday.com	phillyleader.com
berksconews.com	lawrencetimes.com	pittreview.com
butlerconews.com	lehightimes.com	sctpanews.com
cambriatimes.com	lowerbuckstoday.com	scrantonreporter.com
centralbuckstoday.com	luzernetimes.com	sealleghenynews.com
centralchestertoday.com	lycomingnews.com	shenangovalleynews.com
centralpanews.com	monroeconews.com	southchestertoday.com
coalregionnews.com	ncpatimes.com	southdelconews.com
crawfordtimes.com	northalleghenynews.com	southlancasternews.com
cumberlandvalleynews.com	northchestertoday.com	upperbuckstoday.com
dauphinnews.com	northdelconews.com	wcpanews.com
eastmonttimes.com	northerntiernews.com	westmonttimes.com
eriecotimes.com	northhamptonnews.com	westmorelandreview.com
happyvalleytimes.com	northpocononews.com	yorkconews.com

As with the Lehigh Times, the other Pennsylvania-based sites in the network are indistinguishable from typical local Pennsylvania newspapers.

For example, to a reader encountering the Philly Leader at first glance, the site would look similar to any other Philadelphia-focused newspaper. For example, here's what the site looks like next to the Philadelphia Tribune:



The Philadelphia Tribune, founded in 1884, is “the oldest continuously published newspaper reflecting the African American experience,” with a rich history of coverage impacting the Civil Rights movement and providing a voice for Philadelphia’s African American community.

If readers encounter sites like the Philly Leader expecting them to be just as trustworthy as the Philadelphia Tribune, it’s not hard to imagine how readers’ trust in local news could be deeply undermined.

Example: Keystone Newsroom

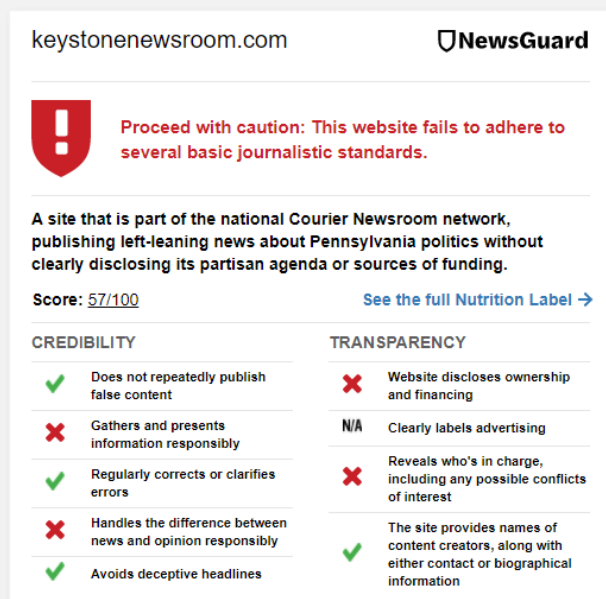
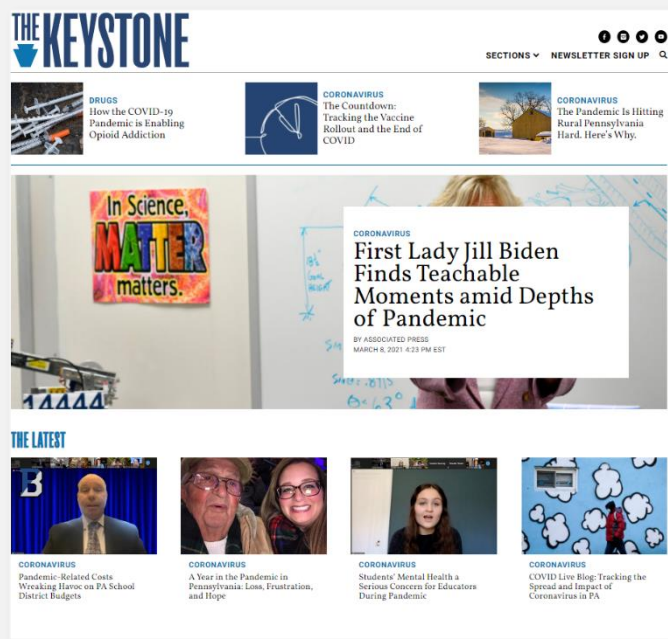
The tactic of using the mantle of local journalism to promote a political agenda is not limited to one side of the political spectrum. While Metric Media tends to promote a conservative political agenda, another local news site in Pennsylvania, Keystone Newsroom, presents similar conflicts of interest on the left.

The site, which began publishing content in February of 2020, describes itself as “a local news site for Pennsylvania” where “facts and first-hand sources are our north star.” The site says it was started because the “decline of local news around the country has negatively impacted

civic engagement” and claims that its founders are “investing in local journalism and storytelling that is thoughtful, informative, and relevant.”

The only problem? Keystone Newsroom owned by the partisan Democratic advocacy group Acronym. On its website, Acronym says that, along with its affiliated Political Action Committee (PAC), it has “helped elect progressive candidates across the country” and describes its work as running “dozens of targeted media programs to educate, inspire, register, and mobilize voters” to vote for those candidates.

In other words, Acronym’s goal is not to produce quality journalism—it is to win elections for progressive candidates.



NewsGuard’s review of the site found that the site’s coverage overwhelmingly praises Democratic politicians while criticizing Republican politicians on a wide range of issues.

In a January 2021 interview, Acronym’s CEO, Tara McGowan, told NewsGuard that the local news sites operated by Acronym are operated independently with no political agenda.

Yet NewsGuard’s review found evidence to the contrary.

On their respective websites, McGowan is listed as the CEO for both Acronym as a whole and of Courier Newsroom, the Acronym subsidiary that operates The Keystone Newsroom and Acronym’s other local news sites.

A draft of Acronym’s business plan [obtained](#) by Vice News in February of 2020 portrayed the different parts of Acronym’s organization as highly interconnected, quoting McGowan as saying that “news” content is a better way to reach voters than campaign ads. The business

plan calls for the Courier Newsroom sites, which include Keystone Newsroom, to produce “content designed to drive strategic narratives to key audiences.” McGowan told Vice News that the plan, which included Keystone Newsroom, was aimed at building “a progressive digital infrastructure.”

Moreover, a NewsGuard review of data from Facebook’s Ad Library showed that The Keystone spent more than \$1.27 million on Facebook ads promoting the site’s content during the 2020 election cycle, using Facebook’s targeted advertising features to serve content critical of then-President Trump to Pennsylvania voters. Facebook regulates political advertising on its platform more rigorously than it does advertising from websites presenting themselves as news sites, requiring requiring greater disclosure for political ads.

A [case study](#) on the Acronym website appears to confirm this strategy. The case study boasts that Acronym and its affiliated PAC “softened the ground” for a Democratic victory in the 2020 presidential election using “ads and boosted news” on social media platforms. “We found that paying to promote news articles on Facebook to low-information audiences was most effective at increasing Trump disapproval,” the case study explains.

TRUST BREAKDOWN: PENNSYLVANIA NEWS COVERAGE

In addition to news sources in Pennsylvania, we also analyzed the sources with the most online engagement for their news coverage *about* Pennsylvania. We used data from NewsWhip to measure online engagement and create a ranked list of news sources with the most engagement on Pennsylvania-focused coverage, then cross-referenced that list with NewsGuard data about the credibility of each site.

We started with a dataset of the top 1,000 sites with the most social media engagement on their Pennsylvania-related news coverage—meaning likes, shares, and comments—across Facebook and Twitter over the period from March 1, 2020 through March 1, 2021. We then pared down the list, removing sites that do not qualify as news sources, such as government agencies, advocacy groups, and others.

Key Finding: Most Pennsylvania news coverage came from credible sources—but unreliable sources attracted proportionally higher engagement on social media.

Our analysis found that more than 85% of the sites with the most engagement on their Pennsylvania-related news coverage were generally credible, achieving Green (Trustworthy) ratings from NewsGuard. Sites in the list had an average trust score of 82.5 out of 100, meaning the typical site in this group adheres to most of the nine criteria NewsGuard uses to assess the credibility and transparency of news sites. Of those, 65% had trust scores of 85 or higher, and 30% had perfect 100-point trust scores.

Only 13.7% of the domains in the list were rated as Red, meaning they are generally untrustworthy, based on NewsGuard’s criteria. But these 13.7% of sites accounted for 25% of all engagement with Pennsylvania-related news on Facebook and Twitter during the yearlong time period we analyzed.

In other words, misinformation sites were more effective at getting users to engage with their content on social media platforms than their more trustworthy counterparts. Red-rated sites among the most engaged in the list included The Gateway Pundit, which earns a NewsGuard trust score of 37.5 out of 100, and The Epoch Times, which earns a trust score of 49.5.

As with the Pennsylvania-based sites, a review of results on the specific criteria finds some areas for improvement among publishers covering Pennsylvania. More than 35% fail to clearly disclose ownership and financing or reveal who is in charge of editorial content, and nearly 30% fail to consistently and transparently correct factual errors when they are made.

Criterion	% Passing
Does not repeatedly publish false content	95.07%
Gathers and presents information responsibly	86.04%
Regularly corrects or clarifies errors	71.48%
Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly	82.50%
Avoids deceptive headlines	93.50%
Website discloses ownership and financing	64.50%
Clearly labels advertising	84.25%
Reveals who’s in charge, including possible conflicts of interest	63.54%
The site provides the names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information	79.18%

TOOLS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING TRUST

What can publishers do to ensure readers trust them—and to distinguish their trustworthy journalism from content published by sites with political agendas or conflicts of interest?

Building trust requires a lot of work, community engagement, and consistency over time—and there is no “silver bullet” for ensuring that you have both earned and acquired your readers’ trust. Instead, in this section of the report, we suggest one simple starting point for building trust: ensuring transparency and accountability to readers.

This means answering many basic, simple readers might want to know in order to understand what they’re getting when they visit a news site—and how much they can trust it:

Questions publishers can answer for readers:

- ✓ Who’s behind the site?
- ✓ Who owns and finances it, and who is in charge of content?
- ✓ How can I contact them?
- ✓ Can I trust them to report news accurately?
- ✓ Do they have an agenda?
- ✓ What is their reputation?
- ✓ Do they have a specific point of view?
- ✓ How do they ensure their reporting is fair and accurate?
- ✓ What happens when they make a mistake?

What publishers can do to answer these questions:

- ✓ Disclose ownership/financing in a reader-friendly manner
- ✓ Disclose potential conflicts of interest
- ✓ Post your policy for correcting errors and an easy way for readers to reach you.
- ✓ Publicly and promptly correct errors you make.
- ✓ If you have a point of view or agenda, disclose it clearly.
- ✓ Label opinion pieces and keep opinions out of news stories.
- ✓ Provide details and contact information for content producers.
- ✓ Make it clear who is in charge of content and how to reach them.

- ✓ Avoid misleading 'clickbait' headlines.

Example: Clearly disclosing ownership

Not every reader will seek out information about the ownership and financing of a news site—but when they do, it's important that they find detailed information answering their questions. Especially as more sites that look like legitimate local news operations turn out to have partisan backers or conflicts of interest, disclosing ownership and financing details is a simple way for legitimate news outlets to set themselves

Example: Clear ownership disclosure:

The screenshot shows the website of The State Journal-Register. At the top, there is a logo for 'SJR The State Journal-Register' and a 'Subscribe Now' button. Below the logo, the word 'GANNETT' is displayed in large blue letters. The main content area contains the following text:

The State Journal-Register is owned by Gannett Media Corp.

At Gannett Media Corp., our mission is to deliver high quality and trusted journalism, products and services that enrich the communities we serve – our readers, commercial partners, employees and investors.

Gannett Media Corp. is one of the largest publishers of locally-based media in the United States. We publish more than 261 daily newspapers that reach more than 140 million people.

UpCurve, a Gannett subsidiary which provides marketing, digital solutions and cloud services to small and mid-sized businesses, continues to grow. UpCurve's businesses leverage Gannett Media Corp.'s core strengths. Currently, those businesses include ThriveHive, Gannett Auto and BestRide.com, W-Systems and ViWO.

While we have experienced significant growth over the last several years, we continually strive to make ourselves not just a bigger company, but a stronger one.

Below the text, there is a dark blue footer section with a grid of links. On the left, there is a 'Never miss a story' section with a 'Subscribe Now' button and a 'Sign up for daily e-mails' section with an email input field and a 'Sign Up Now' button. The grid of links includes:

SITE SERVICES	MARKETPLACE	SECTIONS	INFORMATION
Support Local Businesses	Cars	News	E-edition
My Profile	Homes	State Government	Today's Front Page
Live Chat	Classifieds	Sports	Text Alerts
Contact Us	Newspaper Ads	The Voice	Calendar
Subscribe	Garage Sale Directory	Local Entertainment	
Commenting Rules	Place an Ad		
Archives	Advertise With Us		
Manage Online Subscription	Pay Your Ad Bill		
Manage Print Subscription			

At the bottom of the footer, it says: © Gannett Co., Inc. 2020. All rights reserved.

Example: Provide information about content creators:

It is important that readers know not only know that the reporters producing content are real people—but also that they understand why reporters are credible sources of journalism—and are accessible for readers to contact. An example of a best-practice author page is below:

The screenshot shows the author page for Lisa Rein. It includes a profile picture, her name, location (Washington, D.C.), and a headline: "Reporter covering federal agencies and the management of government in the Trump administration". Below this is her education (Wesleyan University, B.A. history) and a detailed paragraph about her career. A blue box points to the headline with the text: "Clear description of what beat/topics the reporter covers." Another blue box points to the detailed career paragraph with the text: "Detailed description of background, past reporting experience, and disclose any potential conflicts of interest." A third blue box points to the "Connect" section, which includes links to email, Twitter, Facebook, and RSS, with the text: "Direct link to email and social media accounts". At the bottom right, there is a button that says "Share confidential news tips with The Post".

Example: Disclosing an overall perspective or point of view

There is some debate in the journalism world over whether quality journalism can have a point of view—or whether it must strive for “both sides” balance. At NewsGuard, we believe that what is most important is for publishers to *clearly disclose* any agenda or point of view they might have. In the below example, the publisher states a clear point of view, saying “Politically, the mirror sits left of center. It has backed the Labour party in every election since 1945.

The screenshot shows the homepage of The Mirror website. At the top is the "Mirror" logo and a "FOLLOW US" section with social media icons. Below the logo, it states: "Mirror.co.uk is the online edition of The Mirror, one of Britain's most trusted news brands." It then says: "Since 1903 we have brought words and pictures from the most important world events to millions of readers both in print and, more recently, online." and "We are committed to reporting the news accurately and with energy and vigour." A paragraph follows: "The Mirror is known for its strong social conscience. More than a century ago we led the campaign for more lifeboats on ships after the deaths of the poorest on board the Titanic. We campaigned against the ivory trade and seal clubbing and helped create the World Wildlife Fund. Our **battle alongside families of the 96 victims of the Hillsborough Disaster** changed the course of history. More recently we waged a campaign to save the British steel industry and explored the **current homelessness crisis**. A change in the law on organ donation, which could save 500 lives every year, is due to come into force in 2020 thanks to **our long-running campaign**. This has been a huge victory for the Mirror." Another paragraph says: "And our annual **Pride of Britain Awards**, celebrating the ordinary people of this country who have achieved extraordinary things, reflects the very best of the Mirror and its values." At the bottom, a blue arrow points to the statement: "Politically the Mirror sits left of centre. It has backed the Labour Party in every election since 1945."

Example: Reveal who's in charge of content

Many conspiracy theories aimed at making readers distrust the media prey on readers' confusion about who is in charge of content at popular media sources. Publishers can combat this by making it easy for readers to see not only the names of the people in charge of content production at a company—but who they are, their backgrounds, and any conflicts of interest they might need to disclose.

Masthead	
David G. Bradley Chairman, <i>The Atlantic</i>	Laurene Powell Jobs Founder and President, Emerson Collective
Michael Finnegan President, <i>Atlantic Media</i>	Peter Lattman Vice Chairman, <i>The Atlantic</i>
Aretae Wyler Chief Operating Officer, <i>The Atlantic</i>	

Editor in Chief Jeffrey Goldberg	Publisher and Chief Revenue Officer Hayley Romer
Executive Editor Adrienne LaFrance	Executive Vice President, Strategy and Operations Kimberly Lau
Editor, Magazine Don Peck	Senior Vice President, Growth Sam Rosen
Creative Director Peter Mendelsund	Senior Vice President, Partnerships Johanna Mayer-Jones
Managing Editors Swati Sharma , Gillian B. White , Sarah Yager	Senior Vice President, Product and Engineering Betsy Cole
Deputy Editor, Magazine Denise Kersten Wills	Vice President, Engineering
Deputy Editors Ross Andersen , Michael Owen	

Clearly disclose both editorial and top-level company executives.

Link to biography / contact information for top editors.

Example: Regularly and clearly correct errors

Prominently and transparently correcting factual errors is one of the indicators most strongly correlated with overall trustworthiness for news publishers. But this practice, long standard in printed version of publications, is not consistently applied on digital versions even for legacy news organizations.

As a best practice, publishers should 1) post a clear and transparent corrections policy on their website—with links to where readers can report problems, 2) place editor's notes or corrections at the top of articles when they are made, and 3) collate corrections somewhere that's easy for interested readers to find.

The screenshot shows the NPR website's 'NPR Corrections' page. The page has a header with the NPR logo, 'WNYC', and links for 'SIGN IN', 'NPR SHOP', and 'DONATE'. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'NEWS', 'ARTS & LIFE', 'MUSIC', 'SHOWS & PODCASTS', and 'SEARCH'. The main content area is titled 'NPR Corrections' and includes a brief explanation of the corrections process. Below this is a search filter for '2020' and 'All Stories'. The page lists four corrections, each with a headline, the date of correction, and a brief description of the error. Two blue callout boxes are present: one pointing to the 'our corrections form' link and another pointing to the correction entries.

NPR Corrections

NPR corrects significant errors in broadcast and online reports. Corrections of errors will be made in audio archives, written transcripts and on the website. To report an error, please use [our corrections form](#).

See corrections from: 2020 All Stories Go

Democrats Insist On Tuesday Briefing By GSA Head On Delayed Transition
Corrected on November 23, 2020 • An earlier version of this story misstated the name of the General Services Administration as the Government Services Administration.

At Least 4 Pennsylvania Counties To Miss Election Certification Deadline
Corrected on November 23, 2020 • An initial version of this story said Luzerne County would also miss the certification deadline. The county's election board voted Monday to certify its election results.

FDA Grants Emergency Authorization For A 2nd COVID-19 Antibody Treatment
Corrected on November 22, 2020 • An earlier version of this story misspelled George Yancopoulos' last name as Yancopoulous.

WEEKEND EDITION SUNDAY NOVEMBER 22, 2020

'Say Their Name' Podcast Memorializes Black Men Killed By Police
Corrected on November 22, 2020 • A previous headline and description for this segment incorrectly identified the name of Chris Colbert's podcast as Say Their Names. The podcast is titled *Say Their Name*.

Make it easy for users to report factual errors

Correct errors both on article page and on a separate 'corrections' page if possible

Example: Make it easy for readers to understand your journalistic and ethical standards

Many publishers have internal codes of ethics or guidelines for reporting conduct. The problem is that many readers have no idea about the rigor and care with which journalists conduct their work.

Publishers can help communicate their credibility to readers by publicly and prominently posting details about the publication's ethical and reporting standards. For example:

Code of Ethics

This Code is designed to supplement ProPublica's Conflicts of Interest Policy (required by the Internal Revenue Service), and set out our expectations and aspirations for the conduct of our newsroom.

The mission of ProPublica is to practice and promote investigative journalism in the public interest. All of the values stated here, and the rules set out here, are intended to contribute to that mission. Much of the language below draws proudly on similar policies in place at distinguished American news organizations, including Dow Jones & Company, the Associated Press, the Washington Post and Time Inc. We do this because, while our entity is new, and our business model somewhat innovative, our ethics are neither. They reflect what we and others have learned over many years. At the same time, however, this Code is not immutable. Most of it consists of guidelines; exceptional circumstances may require exceptions to these rules. We expect to continue to learn, and, as we do so, to revise this document in light of further insight and experience.

Everyone affiliated with ProPublica is encouraged to discuss the matters within the ambit of this Code, and to make that discussion a continuing part of our work. Indeed, the most important wisdom about dealing with these questions is: When in doubt, ask.

It is an essential prerequisite for success in the news business that we tell the truth, and that our readers believe us to be telling them the truth. If we are not telling them the truth — or even if they, for any valid reason, believe that we are not — then ProPublica cannot succeed. ProPublica will suffer, for example, if our readers cannot assume that:

- Our facts are accurate and fairly presented;
- Our analyses represent our best independent judgments rather than our preferences, or those of our sources; and
- There are no hidden agendas in any of our journalistic undertakings.

All organizations profess integrity. But the impact of our work on the work of others, and on their lives and fortunes, places special responsibilities upon all ProPublica employees.

These responsibilities include following several important guidelines in our approach in news-gathering, while writing and editing, and after publication:

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- 5 Filing Taxes Could Be Free and Simple. But H&R Block and Intuit Are Still Lobbying Against It.

We strive to identify all the sources of our information, shielding them with anonymity only when they insist upon it and when they provide vital information — not opinion or speculation; when there is no other way to obtain that information; and when we know the source is knowledgeable and reliable. To the extent that we can, we identify in our stories any important bias such a source may have. If the story hinges on documents, as opposed to interviews, we describe how the documents were obtained, at least to the extent possible. We do not say that a person declined comment when he or she is already quoted anonymously.

Editors have an obligation to know the identity of unnamed sources in our stories, so that editors and reporters can jointly assess the appropriateness of using their information. Sources need to understand this practice.

We don't misidentify or misrepresent ourselves to get a story. When we seek an interview, we identify ourselves as ProPublica journalists.

We don't pay for interviews.

We don't plagiarize.

Nothing in our work should be fabricated. We don't use pseudonyms, composite characters or fictional names, ages, places or dates.

Overall, we must be fair. Investigative reporting requires special diligence with respect to fairness. Whenever we portray someone in a negative light, we should make a real effort to obtain a response from that person, preferably in person. We should give them a reasonable amount of time to get back to us before we publish. What is "reasonable" may depend on the urgency and competitiveness of the story. If we don't reach the parties involved, we should explain in the story what efforts were made to do so.

No story is fair if it omits facts of major importance or significance. Fairness includes completeness.

No story is fair if it misleads or deceives the reader. Fairness includes honesty — leveling with the reader.

Any time a question of fairness or accuracy is raised about any aspect of our work, whether by a source, subject or member of the public, the reporters involved should discuss the issue with their supervising editor and decide what response is warranted. When mistakes are made, they need to be corrected — fully, quickly and ungrudgingly.

Promoting trust using NewsGuard ratings:

NewsGuard offers image assets and tools with which publishers may promote their **GREEN** NewsGuard rating to readers on their website, social media profiles, and elsewhere by displaying a NewsGuard badge or linking to their NewsGuard rating page.

NewsGuard provides free image assets, example house ads, and suggested language for social media promotion.

Promoting a green NewsGuard rating can help build trust with readers by:

- Demonstrating that the publication is credible and transparent.
- Providing validation from a neutral, apolitical third party ratings agency.
- Highlighting specific credibility and transparency practices the publication upholds.
- Making readers more aware of basic journalistic standards, thereby increasing their trust in publications that follow such standards.

Below are templates for text and images that publishers can use to do so.

Promoting Your NewsGuard Rating on Your "About Us" Page

You may use any language you wish to tell readers about your NewsGuard rating. We recommend the following language:



{PUBLICATION}'s Journalism Receives A GREEN Rating from NewsGuard

{PUBLICATION} is rated trustworthy by NewsGuard, an organization that employs trained journalists to rate and review news websites for credibility and transparency. NewsGuard uses nine journalistic criteria to rate each website. See our rating.

NewsGuard image assets can be used in conjunction with this language using the links below:

- [Link to download NewsGuard's logo](#)
- [Link to download NewsGuard's Green Icon](#)

Promoting Your NewsGuard Rating Using House Advertisements

NewsGuard has created customizable image assets that can be used as house advertisements by any site that wishes to promote its GREEN NewsGuard rating.

The three panel ad builds as follows:



- [Link to download editable .psd file](#) that can be used to build ads to your preferred specs

If you wish to use this ad, please send the link above to your advertising department. If you have questions or want to learn more about NewsGuard, please contact media@newsguardtech.com.

Promoting Your NewsGuard Rating on Social Media Accounts:

Any publication may use NewsGuard's logo and icon images to mock up a customized Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or other social media ad or card promoting their green rating. To make it easier to do so, NewsGuard has provided recommended text for social media posts and profiles--and image assets to use with those posts. Included in this email are:

- **Recommended text:** "NewsGuard, a service that rates and reviews news websites for credibility and transparency, recently reviewed our website. SFGate.com received a green rating for its high journalistic standards.
- **Social Media Image 'Card':** [Click here](#) to get a simple image to use with social media posts.
- **NewsGuard's Twitter Handle:** Our Twitter handle is [@newsguardrating](#) if you would like to tag NewsGuard in any posts about your rating.



We recommend using the text above for both a tweet/post promoting the green rating and as additional text to add to Facebook/Twitter profiles.

Examples: Publishers promoting their NewsGuard rating

 **INDEPENDENT**

The Independent is awarded 100% trust rating by media watchdog NewsGuard

Media standards organisation assesses thousands of news outlets around the world for trustworthiness

The Independent employs over 100 journalists around the world to bring you news you can trust. To support truly independent journalism, please consider making a [contribution](#) or taking a [subscription](#).


The **Independent** has been awarded a 100 per cent trust rating by NewsGuard, a leading international watchdog for online news media.

The group calculates independent ratings for thousands of news organisations around the world, assessing credibility by checking for false content, deceptive headlines, blurring between news and opinion and the distortion of information.

NewsGuard also analyses how outlets handle errors and their own transparency, including ownership, financing and advertising.

The **Independent** joins news organisations such as the *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *The Guardian* in having achieved a 100 per cent rating from NewsGuard.


The former editor of *The Independent*, Christian Broughton, who became managing director last week, said: "Honest, independent reporting has always been our absolute priority."

 **THE DAILY SIGNAL**

SEARCHCONNECTMENU


The Daily Signal Is Rated Green by NewsGuard

In 2018, The Daily Signal received a green rating for its high journalistic standards from NewsGuard, an organization that rates and reviews thousands of news websites for credibility and transparency. NewsGuard uses nine journalistic criteria to rate each website. [Learn more about NewsGuard's ratings.](#)



Hays Post's journalism receives a 'green' rating from NewsGuard

Posted Nov 24, 2019 5:55 AM


NewsGuard [LEARN MORE](#)

In November 2019, Hays Post was rated by NewsGuard, an international organization that employs trained journalists to rate and review thousands of news websites for credibility and transparency.

Hays Post received a green rating for its high journalistic standards.

NewsGuard uses nine journalistic criteria to rate each website. To learn more about NewsGuard's rating of publications, go to www.newsguardtech.com.

The green or red badge of sites rated by NewsGuard are designed to alert readers about the credibility of a news source and appears on social media feeds and as a browser extension that rates search engine results. The extension can be downloaded [HERE](#).

NewsGuard was launched in 2018. Based on each website's performance on NewsGuard's nine journalistic criteria, each site is rated with a red or green rating. News organizations producing high quality journalism and following basic standards of accuracy and accountability get green ratings.

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  **This website adheres to all nine of NewsGuard's standards of credibility and transparency.**

For More Information:

- For questions about this report or more details on the data, examples, best practices, and recommendations within, feel free to contact the author, NewsGuard General Manager Matt Skibinski: <mailto:matt.skibinski@newsguardtech.com>
- As part of the collaboration with The Lenfest Institute that created this report, Pennsylvania news publishers may request free a voucher for free access to NewsGuard's trust ratings for news sites: voucher@newsguardtech.com
- Many Pennsylvania news publishers already have NewsGuard ratings. Publishers not yet rated by NewsGuard may [request a rating here](#). There is no charge or cost for a publisher to be rated.
- For more information on NewsGuard's rating process: [Click here](#).