

**NewsGuard Statement**  
**November 18, 2024**  
**Attributable to Gordon Crovitz, NewsGuard Co-CEO and**  
**Former Publisher of The Wall Street Journal**

The letter sent by Brendan Carr makes clear that he was misled by relying on false reports about NewsGuard from outlets like Newsmax that earn low credibility scores from NewsGuard. Newsmax gets a 20/100 score from NewsGuard, putting it in the bottom 15% of the more than 10,000 news websites we have rated.

Commissioner Carr's letter states, citing Newsmax, that NewsGuard favors censorship. This is false. NewsGuard was founded in 2018 explicitly as an alternative to government censorship or to continuing to rely on social media platforms' secret algorithms for rating news sources. We take the opposite approach: We apply nine transparent and apolitical criteria for rating news websites and our ratings are disclosed.

Our work does not involve any censorship or blocking of speech at all. Instead of blocking information, we provide users with apolitical reliability analysis. Instead of censorship, we provide users with more information – reliability ratings of news publishers based on apolitical criteria and a transparent journalistic process – so that each user can make informed decisions about which information to trust.

The key claims in the letter about NewsGuard are false, citing unreliable sources:

- The letter says that NewsGuard partners with ad agencies to "effectively censor" targeted websites, which it implies are conservative-leaning sites. However, ad agencies use our ratings to target *more* advertising toward news, and there are more conservative websites on our advertising target list than liberal sites. Among prominent conservative brands rated as credible by NewsGuard that, as a result, benefit from NewsGuard's products driving more advertising revenue to their sites are: Fox News, The New York Post, RedState, Townhall, The Washington Times, The Western Journal, The Daily Caller, The Washington Examiner, The National Review, The Free Beacon, Hot Air, Commentary magazine, the Heritage Foundation's The Daily Signal, and dozens of other conservative brands.

Indeed, many conservative sites get higher ratings from us than liberal sites get, such as Fox News getting a higher score than MSNBC and The Washington Examiner outscoring The New York Times. Again, Newsmax may not like our rating, but that is no excuse for them to validate their low rating with inaccurate claims about NewsGuard or to mislead Commissioner Carr.

- The letter also says that NewsGuard rates Chinese state media as credible while criticizing domestic outlets and that we have judged the claim that COVID-19 could have leaked from a lab to be misinformation. In fact, we do not rate any Chinese state media outlets as credible and have never given a site a lower score for publishing the lab leak theory, which, unlike many other entities, we have always found to be credible and not misinformation.
- The letter falsely suggests that we claim the Hunter Biden laptop was not his or that it was a Russian operation. We never made such assertions. Indeed, the only news sources whose reporting on the laptop we criticized were those that claimed it *was* a Russian operation and *denied* it was Hunter Biden's laptop.

Finally, we note that our journalism is itself speech protected by the First Amendment, and we're concerned to see a government official using the powers of his office, however unwittingly after having been misled by Newsmax, to attempt to prevent a private company (NewsGuard) from producing journalistic content.

There is an alternative to Newsmax misleading government officials in an effort to block independent ratings of Newsmax's editorial practices. Newsmax could instead join the thousands of other news websites that earned higher trust scores from NewsGuard by improving its basic journalistic practices. Indeed, our Newsmax Nutrition Label explaining our criteria and how we applied them provides a roadmap for Newsmax to improve its practices and join the many conservative-oriented and liberal-oriented sites that have increased their NewsGuard ratings by improving their credibility and transparency practices.