

## Rouzer Fails Local Farmers

Letter to the Editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 02.03.22

Poultry is [North Carolina's top agricultural industry](#), generating \$40 billion annually from over 5,700 farms, many in our congressional district. That's why it's so shocking that Congressman David Rouzer continues to block the [Farmer Fair Practice Rules](#).

[Sixty-one percent](#) of America's poultry industry is controlled by five giant companies. Their dominance allows them to [offload](#) the riskiest part of the business to family farmers in areas like ours, keeping the vast amount of profit for themselves.

You can watch an in-depth explanation on YouTube at "Chickens: John Oliver". In short, the problem is that chicken farmers don't own the chickens! The five giant companies, called "integrators", do. They deliver hatchlings to farmers who grow them on consignment.

[Integrators](#) determine the size and breed of chicks, decide how they're raised, and require farmers to buy feed from them. Integrators collect the chickens when fully grown, then pit farmers against each other in a "[tournament system](#)", ranking them by output, and paying different amounts based on rankings they control. Farmers who complain see their rankings, and income, [suffer](#).

Farmers lose money over things they can't control, like Fairmont, North Carolina poultry farmer [Rudy Howell](#), who [sued](#) Perdue for delivering dying chicks and moldy feed. "It doesn't matter what I do," [Howell said](#), "I can't get above water. Our output depends on their input."

The Farmer Fair Practice Rules would [protect](#) farmers like Howell. Instead, Rouzer [protects the integrators](#), whose lobby, the [National Chicken Council](#), is among [his top donors](#). At a [January 20](#) congressional hearing, Rouzer told Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack "I want to push back on these new rules as strongly as I possibly can." Vilsack's response: "Farmers deserve a fair shake. The tournament system is not transparent. Integrators basically pull business from them. This is about fundamental fairness and you know that."

Nobody knows better than Rouzer, who blocked the Farmer Fair Practice Rules in 2016 as [Chairman](#) of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Livestock. He'll block them again if reelected. North Carolina's farmers deserve better.

Larry Widman  
Leland