

Rouzer Worked Against Local Farmers

Letter to the Editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 09.01.22

As [Chairman](#) of the House Agriculture Livestock Subcommittee in 2016, David Rouzer blocked the [Farmer Fair Practices Rules](#). When Agriculture Secretary Vilsack proposed them again this January, Rouzer said “I want to push back on these new rules as strongly as I possibly can.” Now we know what Rouzer’s obstruction cost local farmers.

Poultry is [North Carolina’s top agricultural industry](#), generating \$40 billion annually from over 5,700 farms, many in our district. Five companies [control](#) America’s poultry industry. They [offload](#) the risk to family farmers, and skim the profit for themselves. You can watch an in-depth explanation of how they rig the system against farmers on YouTube at “Chickens: John Oliver”. The problem is that chicken farmers don’t own the chickens! The five companies, called “integrators”, do. They deliver hatchlings to farmers who grow them on consignment.

[Integrators](#) determine how they’re raised, require farmers to buy feed from them, and collect fully-grown chickens. Then they pit farmers against each other in a [“tournament system”](#), paying them different amounts based on a ranking system they control.

Thanks to the Justice Department’s antitrust lawsuit and consent decree filed July 25, we now know that those companies broke the law by failing to disclose [crucial information](#) farmers needed to assess financial risk, like the number, breed, and age of chicks a farmer could expect to receive. The companies conspired for years to drive down employee compensation at poultry processing plants. The companies agreed to repay [\\$84.8 million](#) in lost earnings to their victims and end the tournament system’s deceptive practices.

The Farmer Fair Practice Rules Rouzer blocked would have [protected](#) farmers by ending those deceptive practices years ago. Instead, Rouzer [protected the integrators](#), whose lobby, the [National Chicken Council](#), is among [his top donors](#).

Charles Graham will [protect local farmers](#), not the poultry monopoly. Let’s send Graham to Congress.

Larry Widman
Leland