

FROM THE **PRESIDENT**



Happy 20th Anniversary, OCM by Mike Weaver

We are pleased to announce that this will be our twentieth year, with OCM meeting for the first time on August 26, 1998. Few other farm groups that are completely independent from corporate donations, and thereby influence, can claim to be in existence longer than OCM, and we are very proud. Several of our founding members are still active in our organization providing invaluable background and history of our efforts.

But we must continue the fight. Big Ag is fighting us every step of the way, so we need your continued support both vocal and monetarily. We need you to continue your membership as well as help to recruit more good folks to the fight for family farmers and consumers.

We also need your continued support in contacting your elected representatives voicing your concerns with how corporations are taking over agricultural production, taking the lion's share of food produc-

tion revenue, and having a very detrimental effect on our rural communities. Rural America is drying up and blowing away reminiscent of the "Dust Bowl" days of the 1920s and 1930s because the meat processors, poultry integrators, and retail grocers are drawing all of the revenue out of your food dollar leaving precious little for family farmers.

OCM continues to fight for family farmers on many fronts including:

- Country of Origin Labeling which helps you identify that your meat comes from an American family farmer instead of some foreign country where there may be little if any cleanliness and inspection requirements
 - The Farmer Fair Practices (GIPSA) Rules in support of which OCM this past December filed a law suit with assistance from Democracy Forward to force USDA to implement these rules that place farmers legally on equal footing with the corporations they contract with for the various types of agricultural production
 - The fair, transparent, and verifiable use of our checkoff dollars that farmers are required to pay on beef cattle, milk, pork, and many other products we raise for the American consumer. We are supporting federal legislation and have a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against USDA for beef checkoff expenditure information which USDA is refusing to release
 - We are fighting several state level check-off issues and have helped stop additional checkoff legislation in Oklahoma and California
- OCM is opposed to and helping to defeat the so called "Protect Interstate Commerce Act" (aka the King Amendment sponsored by Iowa Congressman King) which would stop individual states from passing labeling laws and commodity protection measures to help American identify where their food comes from

And the list goes on.

As you can see we are fighting for the American family farmer and consumers on many different issues and levels, so we need your help. If you haven't already, please renew your membership and help recruit new OCM members to help with the fight. Together we can make our twentieth the best year yet. Our family farmers and every consumer need you.^{MW}

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In the Bulb there is a Flower (Hymn of Promise)

*In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.*

*There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.*

By Natalie Sleeth, 1986



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Don't Throw the Baby out with the Bathwater: Not All Regulations Are Bad

by Joe Maxwell

Organization for Competitive Markets (OCM) is celebrating its 20th birthday this year. Since its inception, OCM's mission statement has included the following statement, "True competition reduces the need for economic regulation. Our mission, and our duty, is to define and advocate the proper role of government in the agricultural economy as a regulator and enforcer of rules necessary for markets that are fair, honest, accessible and competitive for all citizens."

OCM has always understood that to secure our country's economic future our government must be the referee of the marketplace. And if there is a referee, then by definition there are rules.

Our government should neither directly support policies that create and allow for

statements about government regulations being the ruination of this country and the killer of the economic opportunities of its citizens. They stand in front of groups of farm community citizens and often times get standing ovations for such broad tough anti-government, anti-regulation speech.

The truth is **NOT ALL REGULATIONS ARE BAD** and we need to start voicing support for marketplace safeguards contained in antitrust regulations. We need to do so proudly as true patriots fighting to ensure the American Dream - earning your piece of America's prosperity - lives on for the next generation.

This is the foundation of our country. If we look back on our history, we will be reminded that the very revolution that delivered our independence was sparked

small businesses the very economic opportunity that they had come to America to secure and possess. The very concept of fair, honest, accessible and competitive markets was the basis for the American Revolution and is a founding principle and economic policy that built America. Everyone should have a right to their piece of

the American Dream, economic justice for all. This principle has led the world to look at us as the land of opportunity, a shining light of democracy for the world.

In the late 19th century, our country came to understand it is not just by government affirming and sanctioning a monopoly that a monopolistic market can be created; we learned that an unchecked market will ultimately become out of balance and monopolies and their abusive practices will develop over time. During this period a handful of business elites, known as Robber Barons, used unethical tactics to crush farmers and workers and amass excessive market and economic power creating a stranglehold on America's economy and denying opportunity and ingenuity in the market. This stranglehold stifled Americans' opportunity for their piece of America's prosperity, a time of haves and have nots. But having "not" out of no fault of their own.

It was Teddy Roosevelt, whose image graces our masthead, that began a decades-long battle to restore economic justice for the American farmer, ranchers and the people. He is known as America's first "Trust Buster." During those times, the Robber Barons used trusts rather than corporations to consolidate their wealth and power, thus Roosevelt was a "Trust Buster."

Following Roosevelt's charge against the Robber Barons, the presidents and their administrations that followed strengthened the antitrust laws with the passage of two pieces of legislation, the Clayton

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- OCM Mission Statement

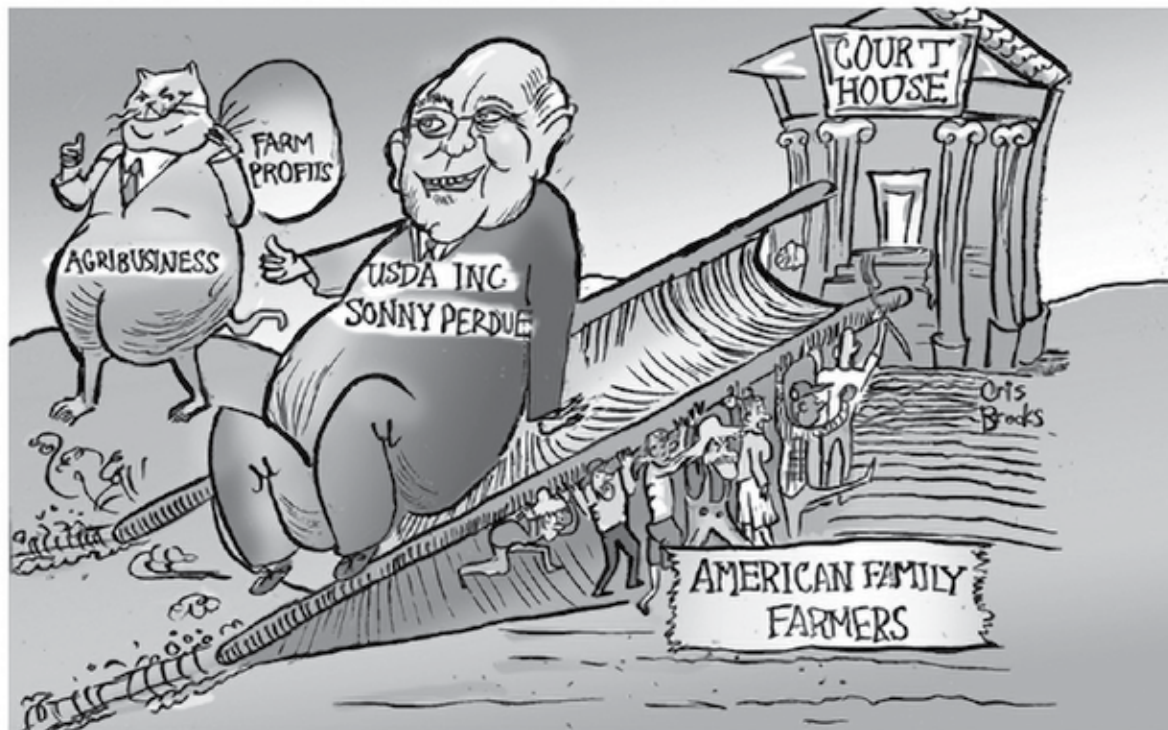
monopolies nor should its lack of action allow for the creation of monopolies and the concentration of market power that squelches economic opportunity for all.

Unfortunately, it has become very popular for our elected officials to make bold

when our then government, England, sanctioned the East India Company as the sole company authorized to sell tea in the Americas, granting them a monopoly over the tea trade. This grant of a monopoly, by our then government, stole from America's

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OCM Sues USDA Over GIPSA Rule Withdrawal



tics Rule,” which would have allowed farmers to hold agribusinesses accountable for practices like retaliation, bad faith cancellation of contracts, or collusion efforts to force farmers out of the market. Despite the long history of such abuses in the poultry and livestock industry, USDA halted the rule, making it effectively impossible for farmers to bring unfair practices claims.

In December 2017, OCM and independent farmers Jonathan and Connie Buttram from Alabama and Jim Dinklage from Nebraska challenged the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for illegal rollback of critical protections intended to shield family farmers and ranchers from predatory and retaliatory practices by big agribusiness corporations. The lawsuit seeks to im-

plement rules that prohibit major meat and poultry producers who contract with farmers from engaging in unfair and deceptive practices. OCM and the individual plaintiffs are being represented on a pro bono basis by Democracy Forward Foundation.

In October, USDA’s Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) withdrew the “Farmer Fair Prac-

“The Administration has eliminated rules designed to level the playing field for family farms and has instead given large multinational corporations the upper hand,” said Joe Maxwell, Executive Director of OCM. “In doing so, Secretary of Agriculture Perdue and the Administration

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MEMBERSHIP *Report* by Pat Craycraft

Happy New Year! It’s time to renew your membership. Membership notices went out the first of the year for renewals as well as for new members to consider joining. We hope that you will continue supporting OCM and our efforts in 2018. Our 2017 memberships were substantially up from the previous year and we hope to continue that trend as we go forward. Please tell others about OCM and invite them to be a

part of our organization.

As memberships come in, if you do not check the option to receive your newsletter by mail, you will be receiving it in electronic form, by email. We hope to convert as many of our members that we can to email this year. If you have any questions about joining OCM or your current membership, please contact Pat at pcraycraft@competitivemarkets.com or 402-817-4443.^{PC}

PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!



MAXWELL (continued from page 3)

Act (1914), which strengthened the previously passed Sherman Act (1890), and the Packers and Stockyards Act (1921). These bills were landmark regulatory legislation that instituted market safeguards for farmers, businesses and citizens. The effect of these government regulations and their enforcement was to break up the stranglehold the Robber Barons had on the market, restoring economic opportunity and justice to American citizens. The presidents who helped usher in these policies and regulations understood that America's future was dependent on stopping the stranglehold that monopolies have on the economy and ensuring that all Americans are given their shot at the American dream, their opportunity to have a piece of the prosperity they were building through their farms and labor. They understood that America is great for all when markets "are fair, honest, accessible and competitive."

From Teddy Roosevelt to Franklin Dela-

in which they live. Today, 71% of America's poultry growers live below the federal poverty level; 90% of U.S. hog farmers and 41% of U.S. cattle producers have gone out of business and over 1,000,000 of U.S. family farmers have been driven off the land since 1980. Farmers and ranchers have seen farm income decline along with the rise of corporate consolidation. Since 2013, U.S. farm income has dropped by \$43.6 billion.

Corporate consolidation has had a devastating impact on small businesses, too. Between 1990 and 2016, federally inspected slaughterhouses decreased by 36 percent. In 1990, there were 1,268 federally inspected establishments, compared to 808 in 2016. Non-federally inspected establishments fared even worse, declining 42 percent since 1990, when there were 3,281 establishments compared to 1,910 in 2016. Jobs and wages have disappeared along with the slaughterhouses. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the animal slaughtering and processing industry employed a total of 506,000 people in 2005. By May 2016, the industry employed only 80,780 people and their average wage was down to half of that

in bed with the modern day Robber Barons: Smithfield, JBS, Swift and the other multi-national agriculture giants.

In response, OCM and 85 other farm organizations quickly called on President Trump to veto Secretary Perdue's abandonment of the market safeguards contained in the Farmer Fair Practices Rules. These farm groups are still waiting for a response from the President. However, during the president's recent speech at the American Farm Bureau Federation convention, the president nearly demanded a standing ovation when he announced how his administration had aggressively ended many of the previous administration's regulations.

So the next time you are at an event and one of your elected officials is touting how great they are for downsizing government and eliminating government regulations, stand up and instead of giving them a standing ovation, ask them to follow in the footsteps of Teddy Roosevelt and become a modern day "Trust Buster." Doing otherwise is simply throwing the baby out with the bath water, and it is your baby - your piece of the American Dream.^{JM}

"... Everyone should have a right to their piece of the American Dream, economic justice for all."

no Roosevelt, these presidents understood that the citizens of the United States could have democracy or a country with concentration of the market and wealth, but not both. OCM stands firmly on this principle; unless there is economic justice for all there is no freedom that democracy ensures.

Unfortunately, over the last two decades, the courts have weakened the farmers' market safeguards contained in the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, and government administrations have nearly refused to enforce those provisions that remain. Our government's inaction and lack of enforcement has allowed as much as 80% of the agriculture market to be controlled by four large multinational corporations. The results have been devastating for America's farm families and the rural communities

of all manufacturing jobs in the U.S.

For years, family farmers fought to have justice restored in the market by reinstating the market safeguards contained in the Packers and Stockyards Act. In late 2016, the USDA finally issued the Farmer Fair Practices (GIPSA) Rules. These rules would have restored farmers' access to justice. Unfortunately, USDA Secretary Perdue withdrew two of the rules and postponed his decision on the third rule. Secretary Perdue has also dismantled the very agency responsible for enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act. All these actions are done in the name of smaller government and fewer regulations. But who is helped by these actions? Clearly not America's family farmers and their rural communities. These actions clearly demonstrate Perdue is

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have thrown America's farmers to the wolves, telling them that their family businesses don't matter. We called on President Trump to reverse Secretary Perdue's actions and he has failed to right this wrong, so we are seeking justice through the courts."

The Farmer Fair Practices Rule was the result of a multi-year process, based on thousands of comments from the public, including independent farmers and ranchers, to help ensure fairness in the production of our country's food.

The suit, which is in the form of a petition for review, was filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. USDA has requested an extension on its deadline to file an Administrative Record (the paper trail that documents the agency's decision-making process regarding the GIPSA rules). The Administrative Record is now due February 22, 2018, and briefing will begin in March.



CAPITOL ROUNDUP

will do the same. This bill fulfills industrial agriculture's interest in stopping family farmers from differentiating their products in the market and will prevent states from taking action to stop the abuses of large multi-national corporations. This is a fight to preserve State's Rights; Our Rights.

IN THE STATES

Virginia Sen-

ate Substitute for SB 374 is the latest in NCBA and its state affiliates' efforts to increase the beef checkoff at the state level. The bill not only quadruples the state tax, \$0.25 to \$1.00, it also grants almost exclusive power to recommend and appoint members to the state agency as well as to self-appoint its officers to a private membership-based lobbying organization, the Virginia Cattlemen's Association. The legislation removes the Governor's authority to appoint member/officers to the state agency, Beef Industry Council and removes the Governor's ability to remove a member of the Beef Industry Council for failure to meet the qualifications or for failing to perform their duties. Further, it renames the Beef Industry Council and makes several organizational changes to include reducing the number of members by half, from 15 to 7. It is a complete takeover of not only the state beef checkoff funds but the federal checkoff assessments collected in Virginia. OCM has joined in the effort to stop this legislation which has gained intense traction in the Virginia Senate.

by **Joe Maxwell**

ON THE HILL

Mayer-Monsanto Mega-Merger: All estimates indicate that the Department of Justice will conclude their investigation sometime in March. There is no indication how they will decide, but our continued efforts are important. There is still time for State Attorneys General to enter the investigation and we have joined with others to reach out to their state offices asking them if they have joined in the investigation and if they have not to immediately do so. For more information you can go to our webpage: <http://competitivemarkets.com/stophthemerger>

H.R. 3599, Protect Interstate Commerce Act; Congressman King (R-IA): OCM has moved this issue up in priority. It does appear it is getting traction in the Congress. Because it totally destroys our state efforts to open markets and provide for livestock, forestry and agriculture safeguards, we are going to fully engage the effort to stop H.R. 3599 and are hopeful you

*Take
Action!*

DEMAND CHECKOFF PROGRAM REFORM

by **Angela Huffman**

Ensure Checkoff Program Reform is Part of the 2018 Farm Bill:

Pass the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act, S. 741 & H.R. 1753 and the Voluntary Checkoff Act, S. 740 & H.R. 1752

This is it. The new Farm Bill will be taken up in the House before the next OCM newsletter goes to print. Now is the time. For many of you, you have been fighting for a decade to restore justice to the checkoff programs.

The House version of the Farm Bill has been drafted and has been sent for budget scoring and is expected to be debated in the House in February. It is time we began to push every U.S. member of Congress and U.S. Senator to sign on to the two federal bills that have been filed.

Now is the time to reach out to your U.S. Senators and members of Congress to urge them to co-sponsor the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act, S. 741 & H.R. 1753 and the Voluntary Checkoff Act, S. 740 & H.R. 1752. To help you prepare for your contacts with Congressional offices go to www.competitivemarkets.com/stopcheckoffabuse or contact Angela at ahuffman@competitivemarkets.com or 614-390-7552.

We will not end the abuse without you taking the time to let your elected officials know how you feel about the checkoff programs. Let us know that you did reach out to your member of Congress and U.S. Senators so we can drop by their offices in Washington D.C. and follow up with them. ^{AH}

Please consider a **2018 Donation to OCM TODAY!**



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MEMBER APPLICATION FORM

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