

"Cut Through the Chase" What a Great Ride!

Charles E. Kruse | Guest Writer
MISSOURI FARM BUREAU

I recently decided I will not run for re-election as president of the Missouri Farm Bureau. It is hard for me to believe, but I was first elected president 18 years ago at the December 1992 annual meeting. I consider it both a privilege and an honor the members of Missouri Farm Bureau asked me to serve as their state president all these years.

What a great ride – I enjoyed it so much. I served on the American Farm Bureau Board of Directors for the last 15 years, on the American Farm Bureau Executive Committee and many other positions at the national level as well.

Decisions like this are not easy, but you know at some point in your life you just start thinking – maybe it is time to slow down a little bit and do some things you want to do, but you have not had the opportunity. I talked with my family, and the more I thought about this, it seemed like it was time.

I certainly don't plan to disappear by any means. In January 1985 – 25 years ago – Governor John Ashcroft appointed me Director of Agriculture. I was given my first opportunity to serve agriculture at both the state and the national levels and am very proud of that.

I certainly want to continue to be involved. I love agriculture – it is my passion, and I certainly want to look for ways to hopefully continue to have an impact on agriculture.

I consider myself blessed to serve as president of Missouri Farm Bureau. The membership is just great, the staff is outstanding and I am proud to play a part in the long history of Missouri's largest farm organization.

(Fourth generation farmer Charles E. Kruse, of Dexter, Mo., is president of Missouri Farm Bureau.)

Righting the Wrongs at Arlington Cemetery

Claire McCaskill | Guest Writer
UNITED STATES SENATOR

Arlington National Cemetery is the nation's most sacred burial ground for veterans and their families. It is a national shrine, a symbol of courage and sacrifice throughout our nation's history.

By now, I'm sure many of you have heard the recent, disturbing news about mismanagement at Arlington. Like you, I was horrified when I heard about the unmarked and mismarked graves of veterans who have fought and died for our country.

I will not stand for this unacceptable situation. I've undertaken an aggressive investigation into what happened at Arlington and will work to ensure that all past mistakes are corrected and future problems are prevented. This disgrace is an example of contracting gone bad. The old method of paper recordkeeping used by Arlington is extremely prone to human error and efforts to digitize these records have failed due to lack of oversight of private contractors responsible for the work.

I recently chaired a hearing in the Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight to hold the cemetery's managers and the Army leadership accountable for their failures. At that hearing, I also heard directly from Kathryn Condon, the newly-appointed Army official responsible for cemetery operations. She assured me that the problems would be fixed, and I plan to hold her accountable to ensure that it happens.

You can watch my opening statement and video highlights from the July 29th hearing on my website: click here.

Americans expect more from their government, and our veterans and their families certainly deserve better. I will continue to work to make sure that our nation's fallen heroes receive the respect they deserve.



"Free Enterprise" is Not Free Enterprise

Kevin Carson | Guest Writer
CENTER FOR A STATELESS SOCIETY

According to Allison Linn, a writer for the website of the liberal MSNBC Network, the usual suspects in the corporate economy are engaged in a major rebranding effort ("Capitalism? Yuck! But free enterprise? Yes!" July 21).

It seems they've figured out that Americans, as measured by polls and focus groups, tend to react negatively to the word "capitalism." "Free enterprise," on the other hand, is right up there with motherhood and apple pie.

So the Texas Board of Education voted to replace textbook references to "capitalism" with "free enterprise." And the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has eliminated "capitalism" from its propaganda in favor of "free enterprise."

According to James E. MacDougald, of The Free Enterprise Nation, "There's been a demonization of the word 'capitalism' It's been used so often by people ... who are anti-corporate or anti-business that they've, I think successfully, created the idea that capitalism and greed are the same thing, where free enterprise isn't greedy but capitalism is greedy."

But the choice of the term "free enterprise" is just a transparently lame attempt to polish a ... well, you get the idea. The problem is that these people are still defending the present system of corporate capitalism that made them rich -- and it ain't free enterprise. Every single awful thing about the present corporate economy that Americans react to negatively when they hear the word "capitalism" is at the heart of how the dirtbags in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who love to toss around the words "free enterprise," actually make their money.

What the Chamber of Commerce means by "free enterprise" is exactly the same thing that people like Naomi Klein and Michael Moore are attacking under the name of "capitalism." As a result, most people hear the words "free enterprise" and "free markets" emanating primarily from the same interests that want to protect the system as it is, and that depend most heavily on the suppression of the free market for their livelihood. No wonder establishment libertarianism has such negative "pot-smoking Republican" connotations for so many people.

Believe it or not, though, there are some of us on the free-market left who genuinely believe in free enterprise, and who see truly freed markets as the enemy of corporate capitalism. Far from seeing the Robber Baron capitalism of the Gilded Age as some laissez-faire utopia, we see it as the beginning of a corporate-state system of power which has lasted for 150 years, upheld by massive collusion between big government and big business. The primary function of the state during that time has been to subsidize the operating costs of big business and to protect it against competition. And the interests that talk the most about "free enterprise," generally speaking, are the very ones most tightly hooked into the corporate state.

A genuine free enterprise system, without state-enforced artificial scarcities, artificial property rights or subsidies, would be like dynamite at the

foundations of corporate power. It would be an economy of far more evenly distributed property ownership and decentralized production, looking a lot more like something imagined by Ralph Borsodi than by Alfred Chandler.

So I'd love to issue a challenge to those "free enterprise" hucksters in the Chamber of Commerce: Let's have genuine "free enterprise," and let's have it now. That means repealing the DMCA, WIPO Copyright Treaty, drug patents, and all other "intellectual property" law -- and telling the RIAA, MPAA and Microsoft where to get off. It means cutting the automobile-highway complex, the military-industrial complex and agribusiness off from the taxpayer teat. It means eliminating all regulatory barriers to the competitive issue of low-interest credit through mutual banks, against people's own property or their future earning power. It means ceasing to enforce all absentee titles to vacant and unimproved land. And it means an end to an American foreign policy whose main goal is to make the entire planet safe for corporate power.

My guess is that this is the kind of free market that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce would get Katherine Harris and James Baker to stage another coup to prevent.

Libertarians: Federal Spending Excessive

The White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recently released its Mid-Session Review. On reviewing the report, Libertarian Party Chair Mark Hinkle called the report's spending projections "disappointing and troubling."

According to the report, federal spending was 24.7% of GDP in 2009, and is expected to be 24.6% this year, rising to 25.1% in 2011. (All years are fiscal years.)

Hinkle commented, "The federal government is commanding a larger percentage of our economy than it has at any time in American history, except a few years during World War II. Instead of free citizens making our own economic decisions, the federal government is making those decisions for us."

Hinkle added, "At the beginning of the twentieth century, the federal government spent less than five percent of GDP."

The report projects that federal spending will still be over 23% of GDP in the year 2020. "In other words, said Hinkle, "the White House is admitting that its spending will be at record-high levels as far as the eye can see. That's great for special interests who get their money from the federal government, but it's very bad news for the rest of us."

"I'm seeing visions of low economic growth and high dependence on government. Future generations are facing economic hardship instead of prosperity. "The current crop of politicians in Washington simply don't have what it takes to reverse this damage.

Democrats and Republicans have proven decade after decade that they are incapable of doing anything but grow government."

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