

Understanding the Role of Constitutional Government in Promoting Economic Prosperity

Explore: *Wickard v. Filburn*

Wickard v. Filburn

Throughout the 1930s, the federal government attempted to end the Great Depression and reform capitalism through a series of policies known as the New Deal. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 was one law enacted during this time, which attempted to stabilize the price of wheat across the United States, among other things. The law gave the federal government the authority to regulate the amount of wheat that individual farmers could grow in an attempt to prevent the overproduction of the crop, which in turn drove its price down.

Roscoe Filburn was a farmer in Dayton, Ohio. In 1941, Filburn grew more wheat than was allowed and was ordered by the federal government to pay a fine. Filburn argued that the surplus amount was for his own personal use, and that it therefore could not be regulated as interstate commerce by the federal government. Claude Wickard, the Secretary of Agriculture, argued that even if Filburn's surplus wheat was for personal use, it still had an impact on interstate commerce when considered in the broad picture.

The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of Wickard, determining that if Filburn had not grown the surplus amount, he would have needed to purchase that amount from the market. Therefore, his action impacted interstate commerce and Congress had the right to regulate it. The decision was an expansive interpretation of what could be considered interstate commerce.

mybri.org >> Building Blocks of Progress >> Lesson 4: Understanding the Role of Constitutional Government in Promoting Economic Prosperity

PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP |

**BILL of RIGHTS
INSTITUTE**



**HOOVER
INSTITUTION**

**Stanford
University**