



Colorado's 8th District Has National Implications for Animal Agriculture

Colorado's 8th Congressional District may cover just part of one state, but its 2026 election could influence national politics. It's a key race in the fight for control of the U.S. House, with Swing Left labeling it a "Must-Flip" seat. The district race has Democrat Manny Rutinel vying for incumbent Republican Gabe Evans' seat. The seat has drawn the attention of out-of-state interests. Some of the evidence lies in where campaign financing is coming from for Manny Rutinel – almost 90% is out of state. That makes CO-08 significant for agriculture for two reasons:

1. It could help determine which party controls Congress
2. The contest involves a candidate who is a known animal rights activist with a terrible record of working to destroy animal agriculture

The House Math Makes Individual Districts Matter

CO-08 isn't just about what the candidates bring to the table regarding community representation north of Denver. Gabe Evans is known for supporting agriculture. His challenger, Rutinel, is known for an almost 20-year history of ideologically based activism against animal agriculture. Rutinel has openly advocated for Trojan Horse tactics when it comes to implementing his ideological agenda.

A change in House control influences leadership, agendas, legislation, and proposal viability. The House has 435 seats, with 218 needed for a majority when full. This explains the intense focus on competitive districts. Swing Left targets flipping GOP seats in close races, aiming for a House majority as a key goal, and Colorado's Congressional District 8 is squarely in the crosshairs.

Manny Rutinel and Anti-Animal Agriculture Activism

Rutinel's views deserve scrutiny given his record. Before running for Congress, Rutinel was appointed to a vacant seat in the Colorado State House, where he represented House District 32. In that seat, he served on the energy and environment committee and sponsored HR24-1338, which has significant potential to harm agriculture. He is on record advocating the use of environmental regulation, what he calls "environmental justice", to advance his animal rights ideological agenda. As a Colorado State

Representative, Rutinel taught an animal rights law course at the University of Denver and sat on a panel at the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) 2024 Student Convention.

Beyond his anti-animal-agriculture activities as an appointed Colorado state representative, his involvement in animal rights activism predates his legislative career. Public reports have examined his statements, activism, and ties to radical groups such as PETA, Mercy for Animals, and HSUS (now Humane World for Animals) dating back to his undergraduate years. There are images in state and national publications of Rutinel dressing up in costumes to represent PETA and veganism and to protest against beef producers. As a graduate student in Yale Law School's animal rights club, he authored a report advocating a shift in food consumption from animal products to plant-based alternatives.

Animal-Rights Policy Can Become Agricultural Policy: Federal Laws and Voting Records Show that Animal Agriculture is Under Attack in Washington D.C.

There is genuine concern that D.C. lawmakers, who are influenced by animal-rights ideological groups, will promote additional federal laws that restrict animal agriculture. Year after year, we see egregious federal bills emerge. For example, the Farm System Reform Act, supported by Cory Booker and Ro Khanna, aims to severely restrict CAFOs and fully eliminate them by 2040. Despite opposition from the cattle industry and other livestock producers, it has gained Democratic support. Democratic-led opposition to the EATS Act is another concern. The EATS Act was created to counter California Prop 12, which is affecting producers nationwide. Prop 12 was a ballot initiative sponsored by animal rights groups. Rutinel has publicly endorsed Prop 12 and has encouraged its spread to other states. It is a reasonable assumption that if Rutinel wins Colorado's 8th District, he will support legislation like the Farm System Reform Act that attacks agriculture and will oppose legislation like the EATS Act. This underscores the importance of congressional elections for livestock producers, especially the race in Colorado's 8th District.

Lawmakers Promoted and Supported Financially by Animal Rights Groups

Beyond pushing their agenda to the public via protests, advertisements, and propaganda pieces, animal rights ideological groups identify key legislation, mobilize supporters, lobby lawmakers, and assess officials. Congressional scorecards from groups such as Humane World for Animals and the ASPCA rate lawmakers based on their votes and legislative actions. These scores reveal what these organizations value ideologically and politically. Lawmakers who score high on these scorecards receive support from these activist groups. The scorecards also serve as tools to sway voters who subscribe to the animal rights ideological agenda. This makes the composition of Congress highly significant, as bills require supportive legislators and votes to pass.

Animal rights organizations and related companies use these scorecards to guide campaign donations. Notably, Manny Rutinel's campaign finance report shows many individual donors who are animal rights activists. These donors likely believe Rutinel will advance their ideological goals in Washington, D.C. Nearly 90% of Rutinel's campaign contributions come from out-of-state donors, which should be a strong message to Colorado voters.

The Bigger Picture

The fact that a known animal rights ideologue is vying for the seat in Colorado's 8th Congressional District deserves attention beyond its boundaries. This is about the bigger picture and who writes federal agricultural policy, who controls congressional committees, and which legislative philosophies can accumulate the 218 votes necessary to pass the House. Recent history provides evidence that Democratic lawmakers have been the principal congressional sponsors and cosponsors of legislation that harm animal agriculture and blockers of legislation that will protect it.

For livestock agriculture, the Humane World for Animals and ASPCA scorecards are particularly worth watching because they reveal the lawmakers that those organizations seek to reward.

Colorado should send a representative to Washington, D.C., who is going to be looking out for its best interests, especially when it comes to agriculture. One congressional seat is only one vote. In a closely divided House, however, one vote can matter considerably. Colorado's 8th District therefore sits at the intersection of two national battles: the struggle for control of the House and the protection of the future of animal agriculture. Coloradan's must be well informed about their representatives and most importantly, turn out to vote to make sure the best representative wins the seat.