



Manny Rutinel's Animal-Rights Record Raises Questions About His Newly “Nuanced” Position on Animal Agriculture

Appointed Colorado State Representative and congressional candidate Manny Rutinel has recently attempted to portray his views on animal agriculture as more moderate and “nuanced” than his earlier statements and over almost two decades of activities might suggest. However, his participation in the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s (ALDF) 2024 Student Convention provides additional context for evaluating that claim. The convention occurred less than a year before Rutinel announced his campaign to represent Colorado’s 8th Congressional District, a region that includes Weld County and some of the most economically important cattle, dairy, meat-processing, and agricultural operations in the state.

Rutinel appeared at the ALDF Student Convention on October 18, 2024, in Portland, Oregon. We acquired recorded clips of Manny Rutinel on the speaker panel, published on the ALDF's YouTube channel, and we invite readers to listen to them on our website.

Why Does Rutinel's Alignment with ALDF Matter?

The ALDF is a radical vegan animal rights group that uses litigation, lobbying, and legislation as tools to push its ideological agenda. ALDF has a long history of legal attacks against animal agriculture, and it supports undercover work to malign livestock producers. It uses the animal rights lexicon with made-up terms to describe animal agriculture.

ALDF 2024 Student Convention

The ALDF Student Convention aimed to connect law students with animal law professionals and promote involvement in litigation, legislation, policy, and nonprofits. Its career panel featured activists like Cheryl Leahy of Animal Outlook, known for investigations, litigation, challenging agricultural practices, and expanding vegan options. Rutinel participated alongside other leaders from animal rights organizations, showing how public office, nonprofit work, and legal practice can promote animal-law interests. His presence was significant beyond being a vegan speaker; he represented a professional and political figure within an organized animal-law network helping students build careers in this field. He even inferred that he used his position as an attorney to mislead voters about the consequences of legislation.

The ALDF's program identified Rutinel as a Colorado legislator and CEO of Climate Refarm, a platform funding high-impact climate solutions in the food system. It also highlighted his work as an attorney for Earthjustice and his Yale Law School background, as well as his participation in the ALDF Chapter at Yale Law School.

Climate Refarm was not just promoting minor reforms. Rutinel's work aimed to shift institutional food systems from animal products to plant-based options. He co-authored a Yale proposal, *From Animals to Plants*, advocating using carbon-market financing to help farmers transition from livestock to plant-based agriculture.

Rutinel is More Than a So-Called Ex-Vegan - A Longstanding Record of Opposition to Animal Agriculture

Rutinel's participation at the ALDF Student Convention demonstrates that, as recently as 2024, he remained professionally connected to the animal-law movement and was willing to serve as a career example for students interested in using law and public policy to advance animal-focused causes. This shows his claims of "youthful experimentation with veganism" are wholly inconsistent with his activities pushing animal rights ideology that span almost two decades.

Less than one year after serving on a panel at the ALDF Student Conference, Rutinel announced his bid for the 8th Congressional District. Rutinel is hoping that by donning a cowboy hat and using deceptive language, he can gaslight voters into ignoring his long history of attacks against animal agriculture. Taken together, these activities reflect a sustained policy agenda. They were not limited to a private decision about what Rutinel chose to eat. We have compiled a timeline of Rutinel's animal rights activities, and we encourage readers to review it on our website.

The Commencement of Gaslighting and Claims of a Newly "Nuanced" Position and Statements of "I Am Not A Vegan"

As scrutiny of this record increased during his campaign for Congress, Rutinel began deploying classic gaslighting techniques, describing his views differently. In October 2025, Rutinel told *The Colorado Sun* that his position on meat and dairy was more "nuanced" than his earlier statements and activities suggested. He said his criticism was directed at "bad actors" within the industries rather than animal agriculture as a whole. He also began praising Colorado ranchers as good land stewards and as the "envy of the globe."

During a June 2026 debate, Rutinel stated that he was no longer vegan. He said it was important for him to be able to enjoy products made by Colorado ranchers and emphasized that farmers, ranchers, and meat-processing workers were his friends. That explanation represents a cataclysmic narrowing of his earlier position. It is substantively different from his descriptions of animal agriculture itself as a "horrific and exploitative industry". It is also different from arguing that the world must dramatically reduce its use of animal products or developing financial mechanisms intended to transition farmers out of livestock production.

Ending a vegan diet does not necessarily demonstrate that he has rejected the policy agenda he previously supported for almost two decades. In the debate remarks reported publicly, Rutinel did not clearly renounce his description of animal agriculture as a horrific industry. Nor did he expressly disavow his proposal to finance transitions away from livestock, his support for reducing animal-product consumption, or his earlier assertion that the world must dramatically shift toward plant-based foods.

Colorado Producers Deserve Respect and Honest Answers

His statement addressed what he currently eats. It did not fully answer what agricultural policies he would support in Congress. The central issue is not whether Manny Rutinel personally eats meat today. The central issue is whether he has genuinely reconsidered the ideology and policy proposals he recently promoted for almost two decades, or whether he has simply adopted more reassuring language while campaigning to represent one of Colorado's most important agricultural regions. Until he directly addresses and disavows the specific positions he previously advanced, his claim that his views are now "nuanced" leaves intelligent people disgusted.

Colorado livestock producers deserve respect and clear answers. Once you look at Rutinel's long record and his cosplay attempts, it adds up that his statements amount to complete disrespect and full-on gaslighting in order to change a political presentation rather than a change in underlying policy goals.