



Before Running for Congress: Manny Rutinel’s Almost Two Decades in the Animal Rights Movement

As an appointed Colorado State Representative Manny Rutinel campaigns for Congress in a key agricultural district, questions about his animal rights movement history have arisen. Rutinel has stated he no longer holds some past positions, is no longer vegan, and has gained a nuanced understanding of animal agriculture through conversations with ranchers. However, his documented involvement with the animal rights movement extends from college activism and social media posts in his early twenties to Yale Law School, an agricultural startup, litigation against meat facilities, animal law teaching, and a 2024 appearance before the Animal Legal Defense Fund Student Convention during his time in the Colorado General Assembly.

Understanding that history is important for agricultural producers who are now being asked to evaluate Rutinel as a congressional candidate.

Animal Rights Ideology Started at 14 and Grew from There

Rutinel's opposition to animal agriculture started around age 14 after watching a documentary. In deleted Reddit posts, he described giving up “animal flesh” and expressed support for animal liberation. In July 2026, The Colorado Sun reported he envisioned animals moving to sanctuaries after legislation. He also questioned why everyone couldn't adopt a vegan lifestyle and how future generations would view animal treatment, though he now says those posts reflected his youth.

His involvement grew in college as a campus coordinator for The Humane League, advocating for policy changes and reducing animal use. At the 2024 Animal Legal Defense Fund Student Convention, he said this role helped him feel part of the movement and develop his identity as an advocate, aided by a supervisor. Before law school, he interned with the Humane Society's policy division, forming a career path that includes animal law, environmental litigation, and policy work. He has also been aligned with radical animal rights groups PETA and Mercy for Animals

Animal Law at Yale

Rutinel attended Yale Law School and focused on animal and environmental law. Yale named him a student fellow in Yale's Law, Ethics & Animals Program; he was a member of the Animal Legal Defense Fund's Charter Club and worked with Yale's Climate, Animal, Food, and Environmental Law & Policy Lab. His team proposed using carbon-market funding to replace livestock with plant-based businesses, aiming for adoption by voluntary carbon registries and cap-and-trade programs. During the 2024 ALDF convention, he explained he left law school during the pandemic to start Climate Refarm, which he linked to the Yale CAFE Lab, focused on transitioning farmers from animal agriculture.

Litigation Against Meat-Processing Facilities

After graduating from Yale, Rutinel became an associate attorney with Earthjustice's Sustainable Food and Farming Program. He coauthored a 2023 Earthjustice article announcing the outcome of litigation intended to compel the Environmental Protection Agency to update water-pollution regulations governing slaughterhouses and animal-rendering facilities. At the 2024 ALDF convention, Rutinel described his Earthjustice role in much more direct language:

"My whole job was to take on large meat corporations and sue them for all their worth."

From Attorney to Appointed Official Pushing Animal Rights Ideology

Rutinel was appointed to an open seat in the Colorado House of Representatives in 2023. He also co-taught an animal law course at the University of Denver. During his first few months at the Colorado State House, he sponsored legislation HR24-1338 that by design has the ability to significantly harm livestock producers with its formula for considering cumulative exposure to pollution in the permitting process.

In October 2024, he appeared before the Animal Legal Defense Fund Student Convention as a sitting Colorado state representative. There, he discussed how animal advocates could influence corporations, regulatory agencies and elected offices. He described government service as an opportunity to advance ideas related to animal agriculture and encouraged members of the movement to pursue careers beyond animal rights organizations. These remarks matter because they were made well after the Reddit posts that Rutinel now has blown off, attributing them to his youth.

A Record Extending Beyond Personal Diet

Rutinel states he hasn't been vegan for years and now eats meat, citing experience and conversations with agricultural producers. He argued in 2024 that veganism shouldn't be a purity test for participating in the animal movement, as contributions like donations, protests, political, and professional efforts matter even if one continues eating animal products. The real issue for agricultural voters is whether he still supports the policies and strategies he promoted through Yale, Climate Refarm, Earthjustice, and the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Since he seems willing to gaslight voters by cosplaying in a cowboy hat, and he is on record inferring that he has used his title as an attorney to mislead people about his familiarity with legislation. We are going to suggest that his current statements are driven by a desire to get elected to office rather than by forthrightness about his long-held beliefs.