After campaigning in small cities across Florida, Southwest Florida’s state Rep. Matt Caldwell is returning home to shore up his Republican base in his bid for agricultural commissioner.

And it’s not a bad base to have. While Southwest Florida makes up slightly less than 10 percent of the state’s total population, it contributed 14.5 percent of the vote in the last Republican Senate primary and 14.1 percent in the last presidential primary, according to state division of elections data.

Caldwell plans to announce on Thursday his unanimous support from the region’s Republican state House members, including Collier County’s Byron Donalds and Bob Rommel, both from Naples, as well as Lee County’s , Dane Eagle of Cape Coral, Heather Fitzenhagen of Fort Myers and Ray Rodrigues of Estero.

“I am proud to have unanimous support from House members in Southwest Florida, a tight-knit and dynamic group who share conservative principles and have been effective in shaping policy and ensuring prosperity for the Sunshine State,” Caldwell, R-North Fort Myers said.

Since May 1st, the House leader traveled 12,232 miles for what he’s referring to as a #2LaneTravels Work Day Tour focusing on the industries he will oversee as the Commissioner of Agriculture.

“Our next Commissioner of Agriculture has the opportunity to get their boots dirty and highlight the diverse and complex challenges that Florida’s businesses and families face day in and day out,” Caldwell said.

The agriculture commissioner is one of four statewide posts along with the governor, chief financial officer and attorney general. By statute, the commissioner can make recommendations to the governor and advocate for positions as a statewide officer.

The office oversees 18 departments that touch most aspects of farming, like protecting crops from pesticides, regulating best practices and which foods end up in stores and schools. It’s also the state’s clearinghouse for consumer complaints.

The Department of Agriculture also oversees the issuance of concealed weapons permits in Florida, which has the highest number in the country: 1.3 million. Under Agricultural Commission Adam Putnam’s tenure in office, he lowered fees for the permits, allowed them to be renewed online, and pushed a bill that made them available at county tax collector offices.

Caldwell faces GOP opponents Sen. Denise Grimsley from Sebring, Paul Paulson from the Orlando area and Baxter Griffin Troutman from Winter Haven in the 2018 primary.

Putnam is the front runner for the 2018 GOP gubernatorial primary.

One of the reasons I'm running for governor and announcing today in front of this fire station is an acknowledgement to 1/

people who put their lives on the line every day....(My colleagues) want to give them the same pension as working in Walmart. The least we can do is give them a good retirement.

Hialeah is a very important city, the fourth largest city in the state of Florida. And it's time you get the respect that deserves.

The most important journey in my political career starts right here in front of this fire station with these first responders in the city of Hialeah.