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GOV. RITTER SIGNS HEALTH AND WELLNESS BILL INTO LAW

LITTLETON — Gov. Bill Ritter today signed into law a measure that allows insurance companies to offer discounts and incentives to small business and their employees who participate in health and wellness programs. Insurers are currently prohibited from offering incentives even to small businesses that want access to health plans with financial and health rewards.

The signing ceremony for House Bill 1012 took place at the Douglas H. Buck Community Recreation Center in Littleton. Gov. Ritter was joined by two of the bill's prime sponsors, Rep. Joe Rice and Sen. Linda Newell.

"This legislation will help employers maintain a healthy workforce, and it will encourage employees to take personal responsibility for their health by participating in wellness programs," Gov. Ritter said. "It also comes at a time when we need our workforce to be healthy and strong to lead Colorado forward."

"Providing incentives for wellness is a common sense idea that benefits our health and our pocketbooks. Employees will be healthier and employers can increase productivity, all while reducing

health care costs. Now that's a win-win," Rep. Rice said. "Also, employees welcome the extra motivation to quit smoking, to exercise, or to lose weight."

"This wellness and prevention bill will help the employer minimize absenteeism, increase productivity and reduce health care costs," Sen. Newell said. "It will also help the employee control his or her own health care costs and have a better chance of better health. Healthy communities mean healthy workers and a healthy economy. It's truly a win-win scenario of personal and business responsibility."

This was the third significant health care bill signed by Gov. Ritter this week. He also signed the Colorado Healthcare Affordability Act – a historic act that will provide health coverage to more than 100,000 uninsured Coloradans. Gov. Ritter also signed House Bill 1103, allowing patients in need of long-term care to be presumptively eligible for Medicaid, which will save costs and improve patients' quality of life. The bill was co-sponsored by Sen. Newell.

"HB 1103 could make Colorado the first in the nation to speed up the process of Medicaid eligibility for long-term care," said Sen. Newell.

Photo Caption Information:

Bill Signing 1: Gov. Ritter is joined by Lt. Gov. Barbara O'Brien (far right), Sen. Linda Newell (second from right) and Rep. Joe Rice (behind Gov. Ritter to the left) at the signing ceremony for House Bill 1012 at the Buck Community Recreation Center in Littleton.

Bill Signing 2: Rep. Rice addresses the crowd during the signing ceremony.

Bill Signing 3: Sen. Newell addresses the crowd during the signing ceremony.