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CONTACT:

Holly Armstrong, Resource Media, 303-803-6411

Governor's Signature Brings Colorado A Step Closer to Cleaner Air

Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act will reduce air pollution and cut harmful health impacts

DENVER — With Gov. Bill Ritter signing the Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act into law today, Colorado puts itself on the road toward cleaner air and improved public health. The broadly supported measure provides relief for public health concerns over air pollution by establishing mechanisms to replace aging coal-burning power plants in Colorado with cleaner sources of energy, which further enhances the state's position as a leader in cleaner energy.

"All Coloradans will breathe easier with the signing of this law," said Dr. Mark Johnson, executive director of Jefferson County Public Health and immediate past president of Public Health Directors of Colorado. "Policies like this that clean up our air are vital because they prevent disease, save lives, reduce hospitalizations and improve our overall health, which also has measureable cost-savings benefits."

The measure is part of a broader effort to build Colorado's new energy economy and tackle climate change. With policies like this, we can continue boosting our reliance on renewable energy and energy efficiency while also making sure that traditional energy development such as drilling is done in a way that protects public health and resources such as our air, water, land and wildlife. The bill had widespread support from a diverse group that included public health advocates, energy companies, legislators from both parties, utilities and conservation groups.

"The Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act is a breath of fresh air for Colorado's Front Range communities, which have been suffering the public health impacts of dirty air from coal-fired power plants," said Elise Jones, executive director of the Colorado Environmental Coalition. "We applaud the leadership of Governor Ritter and the Legislature in developing a creative solution to our air quality challenges while moving us toward a more sustainable energy future – converting polluting coal plants, increasing renewable energy, and when using natural gas, ensuring that the development is done right."

The coal-fired plants that will be replaced or updated with cleaner sources of energy are approaching the tail end of their projected operational lives. These plants face potentially significant and costly upgrades, and emit large amounts of a number of pollutants that are harmful to human health.

Pete Maysmith, executive director, Colorado Conservation Voters:

"This legislation is a badly needed breath of fresh air in the effort to move Colorado away from coal and toward a cleaner and healthier energy future. Thanks to unlikely allies working together, including environmentalists, natural gas companies, utilities, Republicans and Democrats, Coloradans can all breathe easier today."

Pam Kiely, program director, Environment Colorado:

"Colorado is blazing a trail for the rest of the nation at the very moment when leadership and bold vision matters the most. We are at a real crossroads – we can either continue to try to make 19th century solutions work to meet 21st century energy challenges, or we can make a fundamental shift in how we power our future. By taking a cleaner, healthier road less traveled, Colorado will make all the difference."

Vickie Patton, deputy general counsel, Environmental Defense Fund:

"The new law is a trifecta in providing healthier air for our children, strengthening our climate security and growing our clean energy economy."

John Nielsen, energy program director, Western Resource Advocates:

"This new law creates a coordinated framework to reduce harmful air pollution in an efficient and cost-effective way. It will result in cleaner air and healthier communities and will further strengthen Colorado's position as a clean-energy leader."

Roger Singer, regional representative, Sierra Club:

"The Clean Air – Clean Jobs Act is a huge step in the right direction to create a cleaner, more secure energy future. This law will improve air quality, thus reducing asthma and other health issues and protect Colorado's quality of life by reducing climate change pollution."

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