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## **Gov. Ritter signs advanced-nurse bill into law**

**By Joe Hanel**

Herald Denver Bureau

DENVER – Advanced- practice nurses will face fewer bureaucratic hurdles thanks to three bills signed into law Thursday.

State Rep. Ellen Roberts, RDurango, sponsored one of them, House Bill 1061. It allows the advanced nurses to sign a variety of documents that used to need a doctor's signature, including physicals for work or school, end-of-life care documents and applications for handicapped parking permits.

“The role of advanced- practice nurses is particularly important in rural and underserved parts of Colorado,” said Gov. Bill Ritter, who signed the bills Thursday.

More patients are getting their care from advanced- practice nurses, especially in towns like Durango that have a shortage of doctors. The nurses are the ones who deal most often with their patients, but before Roberts' bill, they needed to get doctors to sign many forms even though the doctors often never meet the patients.

“We're just the canary in the coal mine in the rural areas,” Roberts said. “This is a problem that exists across the state.”

Ritter also signed HB1060, which makes it easier for advanced- practice nurses to be listed with insurance companies, and HB1094, which allows them to be paid directly for their Medicaid patients.

About 3,200 advanced- practice nurses are working in Colorado, said researchers for the Legislature.

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