

# Colorado branches out for banking

By Eric Anderson

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Denver Post Capitol Bureau

Colorado will join the 49 other states that allow some sort of branch banking under a measure signed into law yesterday by Gov. Roy Romer.

The action by Romer culminates a struggle for branching that dates back to at least the turn of the century.

The measure, sponsored by Republican Rep. Paul Schauer of Littleton, sets a course for wide-open branching in six years.

"It's going to be a medium-sized step into the 20th century for Colorado banking," said Sen. Bill Owens, an Aurora Republican who carried the bill in the Senate.

The new law will allow holding companies to turn all affiliated banks into branches by 1993. That year, every bank in the state will be able to start up one brand-new branch, as well. Starting in 1997, there will be no restrictions on branching.

Romer said he was particularly pleased with a provision that will allow the immediate creation of up to 10 new branches in "underserved" parts of the state.

Proponents of branching say it could lead to the establishment of more banks in minority neighborhoods and rural areas.

Backers also said the U.S. government would have forced Colorado to legalize branch banking — on Uncle Sam's terms — if the state didn't legalize branching on its own. That's because Colorado allowed savings and loans, but not banks, to branch.

Romer also signed into law yesterday a measure that strengthens child custody and grandparents' visitation rights.

Sponsoring Rep. Betty Neale, R-Denver, said the new law expands the ability to visit, even if the grandchild has been taken away from one or both parents.

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