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## **GOV. RITTER ANNOUNCES MICROSOFT PARTNERSHIP TO OFFER FREE SKILLS TRAINING**

**Westminster, Colorado** – Gov. Bill Ritter joined Microsoft Vice President Gail Thomas Flynn today for the launch of a new training program, Microsoft® Elevate America, at the Adams County Workforce and Business Center.

This public-private venture will provide opportunities for thousands of Coloradans to access online training to learn or enhance their IT skills.

“This program gives Coloradans the valuable training needed to help them find a job, and critical skills that will make them more valuable in the jobs they already have,” said Gov. Ritter. “Whether you’re new to technology or a seasoned IT professional, this online coursework can help you get the skills, training and certification needed to compete in today’s technology-driven workplace. I want to thank Microsoft for partnering with our state’s workforce centers to provide this free training that will help many in their careers.”

The program represents an unprecedented opportunity for Coloradans to gain advanced computer skills and increase their value to employers.

“Elevate America provides resources to help people develop or enhance their skills to meet the changing demands of the job market,” said Gail Thomas-Flynn, Microsoft’s Vice President of State and Local Government, at Wednesday’s launch. “At Microsoft, we believe this type of public-private technology training partnership can play an integral role in building Colorado’s economy in a way that opens up new avenues of employment opportunity for Coloradans.”

For Americans without computer skills, finding a new job during a time of high unemployment can be especially difficult. Through Elevate America, participants begin by taking a Computer Skills Self Survey that helps address their learning needs. Those who are not familiar with technology can start with a free online course to build foundational skills and enhance their basic computer literacy.

Microsoft is partnering with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and the statewide network of Workforce Centers to distribute 12,500 training vouchers. Individuals who want to enhance intermediate level computer skills, can choose the learning path that best addresses their needs. There will be 5,500 vouchers offered for intermediate-level technology skills courses. In these online courses, students can pursue training in Windows Vista, as well as programs from Microsoft Office which includes Outlook, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

In addition, 1,500 vouchers will be offered to individuals who are on an IT career path and are interested in receiving training on advanced technical courses. These courses will provide knowledge of advanced technology applications as server administration, web and application programming and other technical areas.

Elevate America also offers 5,500 vouchers to individuals who are ready to take a proctored exam where their skills can be measured and certified. Upon successful completion of the exam, they are certified by Microsoft through Certiport testing centers as proficient in the skills and are provided with career resources to find internships and permanent jobs.

“Because online programs allow so much flexibility - your ability to participate is not subject to the geographical and time constraints of an on-campus program – Elevate America is an excellent way to recession-proof a career in your spare time while working,” says Donald J. Mares, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. “And if you see your job as vulnerable, this online coursework can strengthen your value to an employer.”

For those currently without a job, Elevate America is a way to forge a path back to the workplace. “Not surprisingly,” Mares says, “computer skills have a direct link to the job market. There are no guarantees, of course, but enhanced education and training is always a good strategy for promoting career success.”

Elevate America is a part of Microsoft’s Unlimited Potential commitment, designed to provide technology training for up to 2 million people nationwide during the next three years. Learn more about Elevate America at: [www.microsoft.com/elevateamerica](http://www.microsoft.com/elevateamerica) or visit [www.coworkforce.com](http://www.coworkforce.com).

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