

Frank Blanco Joins Sandler O’Neill as Managing Director Strengthens Firm’s Industry-Leading Advisory Services to Banks and Thrifts

New York – September 4, 2014 – Sandler O’Neill + Partners, L.P., a full-service investment banking firm specializing in financial services companies, today announced that Frank Blanco III has joined the firm as a Managing Director in the firm’s Investment Banking Group.

Blanco will provide strategic and financial advice to depository institutions. He will be based in the firm’s New York headquarters and will report to Brian R. Sterling and William F. Hickey, Principals and Co-Heads of Investment Banking.

“I am thrilled at the opportunity to join Sandler O’Neill,” Blanco said. “I have long respected and admired Sandler O’Neill as a perennial leader in providing advice to financial services companies. I look forward to bringing my 15 years of investment banking experience and relationships while contributing to Sandler’s mission of helping financial companies build long-term franchise value.”

Blanco joins Sandler O’Neill from Keefe, Bruyette & Woods, a unit of Stifel Financial Corp., where he was a Managing Director and provided advisory services to banks and thrifts. He is the second senior investment banker in the last month to join Sandler O’Neill as an advisor to depository institutions. In August, Jason R. Hach joined Sandler O’Neill from Keefe, Bruyette & Woods.

“Sandler O’Neill has built the premier investment banking group serving banks and thrifts, and a key part of that has been selectively bringing senior advisors into the firm that can deliver real value to our clients,” Sterling said. “Frank is a high-impact advisor to banks and thrifts who will immediately enhance our suite of services. He possesses the skills, experience and relationships to provide the strategic and financial advice that our bank and thrift clients need.”

“We are always eager to grow from a position of strength, and our bank and thrift advisory business has never been stronger,” Hickey added. “The challenges facing our clients continue to grow in number and complexity, so we continue to deepen our resources. We are pleased to welcome Frank to the firm.”

In addition to adding senior investment bankers focused on depository institutions, Sandler O’Neill in recent years has also added dedicated investment banking teams to serve the financial technology, asset management and real estate sectors.

Sandler O’Neill is one of the most active investment banking firms in merger advisory and capital raising for financial institutions. Since January 1, 2011 the firm has advised on 191 financial services merger transactions valued at an aggregate of \$24.9 billion. During that same period, Sandler O’Neill managed 107 public common equity offerings that raised approximately \$39.4 billion.¹

About Mr. Blanco

Mr. Blanco worked at Keefe, Bruyette & Woods for 11 years, joining the firm as an Associate in 2003. He was responsible for covering over 45 bank and thrift clients and executed over 48 M&A transactions, 22 common equity capital raises and six debt capital raises. He began his career at Lehman Brothers, Inc. where he had investment banking roles in the firm’s financial services and global technology groups. Mr. Blanco holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance from Boston College.

About Sandler O’Neill + Partners, L.P.

Founded in 1988, Sandler O’Neill + Partners is a full-service investment banking firm dedicated to providing comprehensive, innovative advisory and transaction execution services to the financial industry. The firm specializes in strategic business planning, mergers and acquisitions, capital markets,

mutual-to-stock conversions, investment portfolio and interest rate risk management, fixed income securities transactions, and mortgage finance restructurings. Sandler O'Neill also is a market maker in hundreds of financial stocks and publishes equity research focused on selected banks, thrifts and insurance companies, investment banks, asset managers, specialty finance companies, e-finance companies, real estate investment trusts, and financial technology companies. Additional information about Sandler O'Neill can be found on the firm's website at www.sandleroneill.com.

¹Merger transaction and capital raising statistics from SNL Financial LC as of September 3, 2014

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