

## **Sandler O’Neill Becomes Largest Researcher of U.S. Bank and Thrift Stocks**

*Financial Specialist Covers More U.S. Banks and Thrifts than any Investment Bank*

**New York – January 9, 2012** – Sandler O’Neill + Partners, L.P., a full-service investment banking firm specializing in financial services companies, today announced that it now publishes research on more U.S. banks and thrifts than any other investment bank. The firm now covers 195 banks and thrifts. It added coverage of 25 banks and thrifts in the last year.

Sandler O’Neill has increased its commitment to covering U.S. depositories at a time when many competitors have scaled back their research on the industry. Serving banks and thrifts has been at the core of Sandler O’Neill’s mission since its founding nearly 25 years ago, and the firm has steadily grown its research capabilities over time to meet investor demand.

“Depository institutions continue to undergo unprecedented change, and more than ever, institutional investors need independent, value-added research to help them unearth investment ideas,” said Mark Fitzgibbon, Principal and Director of Research at Sandler O’Neill. “We are pleased to offer the most comprehensive coverage of the industry, grounded in disciplined, fundamental research, rigorous analysis and deep industry knowledge developed over decades.”

In addition to providing valuable insight to investors, Sandler’s research reports heighten the visibility of smaller issuers who have sufficient trading volume but often do not attract institutional interest. “We have always been a sponsor and key supporter of banks and thrifts,” said Jonathan Doyle, Managing Principal of Sandler O’Neill. “These institutions are critical to the U.S. economy, and we embrace our role in stimulating information flow and delivering fresh insights about them.”

Sandler O’Neill publishes equity research on a total of more than 300 financial services companies and is a market maker in hundreds of financial stocks. In addition to banks and thrifts, the firm publishes research focused on selected insurance companies, investment banks, asset managers, specialty finance companies, e-finance companies, real estate investment trusts, financial technology companies and transaction execution companies, as well as reports on policy and economic developments affecting the financial services sector.

Several financial publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times* and *Institutional Investor*, have recognized Sandler O’Neill analysts as industry leaders based on their accurate earnings estimates and stock picking ability.

### **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 services sector. 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. Additional information about Sandler O’Neill can be found on the firm’s website at [www.sandleroneill.com](http://www.sandleroneill.com).

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