
First Financial Bancorp Announces Commencement of \$85 Million Common Equity Offering

Cincinnati, Ohio - January 26, 2010 - First Financial Bancorp (Nasdaq: FFBC) announced today that it has commenced a public offering of approximately \$85 million of common equity in an underwritten public offering. Barclay's Capital Inc. will act as the sole book-running manager for the offering. RBC Capital Markets Corporation and Raymond James & Associates, Inc. will act as co-managers.

The common shares will be offered pursuant to a preliminary prospectus supplement and accompanying base prospectus filed as part of an existing shelf registration statement, filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on Form S-3. First Financial intends to grant the underwriters an option to purchase up to an additional \$11,475,000 of the common shares sold to cover over-allotments, if any.

This announcement shall not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy these securities, nor shall there be any offer or sale of these securities in any jurisdiction in which such offer, solicitation or sale would be unlawful. The offering will be made only by means of a preliminary prospectus supplement and accompanying base prospectus, copies of which may be obtained from Barclays Capital Inc. c/o Broadridge Integrated Distribution Services, 1155 Long Island Avenue, Edgewood, New York 11717, Barclaysprospectus@broadridge.com, 1-888-603-5847.

Forward-Looking Statements

This news release should be read in conjunction with the consolidated financial statements, notes and tables in First Financial Bancorp's most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2008. Management's analysis contains forward-looking statements that are provided to assist in the understanding of anticipated future financial performance. However, such performance involves risk and uncertainties that may cause actual results to differ materially. Factors that could cause actual results to differ from those discussed in the forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to: management's ability to effectively execute its business plan; the risk that the strength of the United States economy in general and the strength of the local economies in which we conduct operations may continue to deteriorate resulting in, among other things, a further deterioration in credit quality or a reduced demand for credit, including the resultant effect on our loan portfolio, allowance for loan and lease losses and overall financial performance; the ability of financial institutions to access sources of liquidity at a reasonable cost; the impact of recent upheaval in the financial markets and the effectiveness of domestic and international governmental actions taken in response, such as the U.S. Treasury's Troubled Asset Relief Program and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's ("FDIC") Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program, and the effect of such governmental actions on us, our competitors and counterparties, financial markets generally and availability of credit specifically, and the U.S. and international economies, including potentially higher FDIC premiums arising from participation in the Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program or from increased payments from FDIC insurance funds as a result of depository institution failures; the effects of and changes in policies and laws of regulatory agencies, inflation and interest rates; technology changes; mergers and acquisitions, including costs or difficulties related to the integration of acquired companies, including our ability to successfully integrate the branches of Peoples Community Bank, Irwin Union Bank

and Trust Company and Irwin Union Bank, F.S.B., which were acquired out of FDIC receivership, and the risk that exploring merger and acquisition opportunities may detract from management's time and ability to successfully manage our company; expected cost savings in connection with the consolidation of recent acquisitions may not be fully realized or realized within the expected time frames, and deposit attrition, customer loss and revenue loss following completed acquisitions may be greater than expected; our ability to increase market share and control expenses; the effect of changes in accounting policies and practices, as may be adopted by the regulatory agencies as well as the Financial Accounting Standards Board and the SEC; adverse changes in the securities and debt markets; our success in recruiting and retaining the necessary personnel to support business growth and expansion and maintain sufficient expertise to support increasingly complex products and services; monetary and fiscal policies of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (the "Federal Reserve") and the U.S. government and other governmental initiatives affecting the financial services industry; our ability to manage loan delinquency and charge-off rates and changes in estimation of the adequacy of the allowance for loan losses; the costs and effects of litigation and of unexpected or adverse outcomes in such litigation; the uncertainties arising from our continued participation in the TARP CPP, including impacts on employee recruitment and retention and other business practices, and uncertainties concerning the potential redemption of the U.S. Treasury's preferred stock investment under the program, including the timing of, regulatory approvals for, and conditions placed upon, any such redemption; and our success at managing the risks involved in the foregoing. For further discussion of certain factors that may cause such forward-looking statements to differ materially from actual results, refer to the 2008 Form 10-K and other public documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), as well as the most recent Form 10-Q filing for the quarter ended September 30, 2009. These documents are available at no cost within the investor relations section of First Financial's website at www.bankatfirst.com/investor and on the SEC's website at www.sec.gov.

About First Financial Bancorp

First Financial Bancorp is a Cincinnati, Ohio based bank holding company. At December 31, 2009, the company had \$6.7 billion in assets, including \$4.8 billion in total loans and \$5.4 billion in deposits. Its banking subsidiary, First Financial Bank, N.A., founded in 1863, provides consumer and commercial banking products and services, and investment and insurance products through its retail banking center network. Currently First Financial Bank, N.A. operates 127 banking centers. Its strategic operating markets are located within the four state regions of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Michigan where it operates 118 banking centers. The bank's wealth management division, First Financial Wealth Resource Group, provides investment management, traditional trust, brokerage, private banking, and insurance services, and had approximately \$2.2 billion in assets under management at December 31, 2009. Additional information about the company, including its products, services, and banking locations, is available at www.bankatfirst.com/investor.

Additional Information

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