

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STERLING BANCORP DECLARES CASH DIVIDEND
OF \$0.19 PER SHARE**

Establishes Date for Annual Meeting of Shareholders

New York, N.Y., February 12, 2009 – Sterling Bancorp (NYSE: STL), the parent company of New York City-based Sterling National Bank, today announced that the Company’s Board of Directors has declared a cash dividend of \$0.19 per common share, payable on March 31, 2009 to shareholders of record as of March 15, 2009.

“As we begin Sterling’s 80th year in business, our Board of Directors is reaffirming our commitment to cash dividends as an important component of shareholder value,” stated Louis J. Cappelli, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. “Our track record of continuous cash dividends now extends to 253 quarters over more than 63 years, and reflects Sterling’s continued strength and stability in this turbulent phase of the economic cycle.”

The Board of Directors also established Thursday, May 7, 2009, as the date of the Company’s Annual Meeting of Shareholders, which will be held at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time at the University Club, 1 West 54th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.

About Sterling Bancorp

Sterling Bancorp (NYSE: STL) is a New York-based banking and financial services company that serves the needs of businesses, professionals and individuals. With assets exceeding \$2.2 billion, Sterling offers a broad array of products and services, combined with a unique high-touch approach to customer service. The Company’s principal banking subsidiary, Sterling National Bank, with offices in New York City and Queens, Nassau and Westchester counties, was founded in 1929.

Known for its focus on business customers, Sterling offers such services as working capital lines, asset-based financing, factoring and accounts receivable management, payroll funding and processing, equipment leasing and financing, commercial and residential mortgages,

international trade financing, cash management, a wide array of deposit products, trust and estate administration, and investment management services.

Certain statements in this press release, including but not limited to, statements as to future liquidity, future interest rate risk and operating expenses, statements concerning future results of operations, financial position or dividends, plans and objectives for future operations, and other statements regarding matters that are not historical facts, are "forward-looking statements" as defined in the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. These statements are not historical facts but instead are subject to numerous assumptions, risks and uncertainties, and represent only the Company's belief regarding future events, many of which, by their nature, are inherently uncertain and outside its control. Any forward-looking statements the Company may make speak only as of the date on which such statements are made. The Company's actual results and financial position may differ materially from the anticipated results and financial condition indicated in or implied by these forward-looking statements. For a discussion of some of the risks and important factors that could affect the Company's future results and financial condition, see "Risk Factors" and "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations – Forward-Looking Statements and Factors that Could Affect Future Results" in the Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2007.

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