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Small Business Bankruptcies Fall in Select Metro Areas, Economic Uncertainties Continue to Loom in Key Business Markets

ATLANTA, Sept. 9 /PRNewswire/ -- In a comprehensive study on bankruptcy trends among the nation's more than 24 million small businesses, Equifax (NYSE: EFX) uncovered surprising results within key metro areas. While California and several Western regions reported a deceleration in small business bankruptcies, the rate of decrease in these areas and others has been moderate enough to signal continued, underlying weaknesses in today's business markets. In fact, bankruptcy growth over the past six months of 2010 for some MSA's has been on par with rates seen in Q2 2009.

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"These findings show the ups and downs of today's small businesses trying to navigate emerging market trends across all regions," said Dr. Reza Barazesh, senior vice president, Equifax Commercial Information Solutions. "The next six months will likely tell us how economic conditions will impact the future successes or failures of small firms across the country."

This latest Equifax study analyzed national bankruptcy trends by metropolitan statistical area (MSA) over time, with a focus on the Q2 2009 to Q2 2010 timeframe. Results showed that 13 of the top 15 MSA's with the highest number of small business bankruptcies in Q2 2010 had a year-over-year decline from Q2 2009. While bankruptcy rates remain high in the nation's Western MSA's, Los Angeles was the only California region to experience a rise in bankruptcy petitions. With the exception of the Los Angeles/Long Beach and Houston/Sugar Land areas, all other regions on this list saw a drop in bankruptcy rate during the second quarter of 2010. The table below shows that the New York/White Plains and Atlanta/Sandy Springs/Marietta MSA's reported a bankruptcy rate decrease of 25.06% and 35.60% respectively – a decline greater than any other region during this time period.

MSA	Bankruptcy		% of Change
	Total Q2 2009	Total Q2 2010	
Los Angeles-Long Beach -Glendale, CA	971	1066	9.78%
Riverside-San Bernardino -Ontario, CA	756	708	-6.35%
Sacramento-Arden-Arcade -Roseville	605	493	-18.51%

Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	388	394	1.55%
Denver-Aurora, CO	407	388	-4.67%
Santa Ana-Anaheim-Irvine, CA	403	366	-9.18%
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA	401	350	-12.72%
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos CA	394	344	-12.69%
Dallas-Plano-Irving, TX	412	343	-16.75%
California - Rest of State	379	341	-10.03%
Oregon - Rest of State	340	301	-11.47%
New York-White Plains-Wayne, NY-NJ	383	287	-25.06%
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	300	280	-6.67%
Oakland-Fremont-Hayward, CA	351	278	-20.80
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	427	275	-35.60%

While the total number of bankruptcies among the top 15 MSA's declined 16.0% from 7,397 in Q2 2009 to 6,214 in Q2 2010, the bankruptcy rate in these areas for the first six months of 2010 has kept pace with that of 2009. The chart below ranks the 15 MSA's with the highest number of small business bankruptcies for the first half of this year. Out of those MSA's, eight of the regions already have reported bankruptcies in the first six months of 2010 that total 49% or more of the total bankruptcies reported for all of 2009. As the table shows, these MSA's include areas in California as well as Denver, Colorado, Portland, Oregon and Phoenix, Arizona. Another interesting trend is that 13 of the MSA's remained in the top 15 year-over-year from Q2 2009 to Q2 2010 – a sign of the continued pressures imposed on small businesses in today's economic environment.

MSA	Bankruptcy		1H 2010 Bankruptcy Rate as % of 2009 Rate	Q2 2009 Bankruptcy Ranking	Q2 2010 Bankruptcy Ranking
	Total 2010 YTD	Total 2009			
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale, CA	2143	4,003	53.53%	1	1
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	1,456	2,882	50.52%	3	2

Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville	1,024	2,157	47.47%	4	3
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	808	1,574	51.33%	11	4
Denver-Aurora, CO	784	1,572	49.87%	7	5
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos CA	742	1,609	46.12%	10	8
Santa Ana-Anaheim-Irvine, CA	740	1,589	46.57%	8	6
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA	740	1481	49.97%	9	7
California - Rest of State	679	1317	51.56%	13	10
Dallas-Plano-Irving, TX	673	1511	44.54%	6	9
Oregon - Rest of State	631	1160	54.40%	15	11
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	612	1111	55.09%	16	13
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL	594	1927	30.83%	2	16
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	578	1486	38.90%	5	15
New York-White Plains-Wayne, NY-NJ	561	1308	42.89%	12	12

As part of the study, Equifax analyzed the 15 metro areas with the fewest small business bankruptcy filings in the second quarter of 2010. Based on our findings, all of the following MSA's had 10 bankruptcies or less during Q1 2010:

- Kingsport-Bristol, TN-VA
- Columbia, SC
- Clarksville, TN-KY
- Baton Rouge, LA
- Alaska, Rest of State
- Gainesville, FL
- Durham, NC
- Binghamton, NY
- Wilmington, NC
- Huntington-Ashland, WV-KY-OH
- Hagerstown-Martinsburg, MD-WV
- Gulfport-Biloxi, MS
- Charleston, WV
- Amarillo, TX
- Lynchburg, VA

For this study, Equifax applied analytics to identify the total number of small businesses and define the MSA's within the sample population. Equifax classifies a small business as a commercial entity of less than 100 employees. As part of the study, Equifax analyzed Chapter 7, 11 and 13 filings. Chapter 7 is a liquidation proceeding in which a debtor receives a discharge of all debts, while Chapters 11 and Chapter 13 are reorganization bankruptcies that allow individuals and companies to pay off debt over a set period of years.

Visit www.equifaxsmallbusiness.com for more information about Equifax Small Business Solutions.

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Equifax Commercial Information Solutions provides the information and expertise necessary for companies to best understand and manage their dealings with business customers, prospects and suppliers. Our exclusive relationship with the Small Business Financial Exchange, along with other proprietary sources, provides the best-in-class commercial credit risk data. Combined with highly predictive scoring and innovative technology, businesses can leverage this information to make quick, confident credit decisions and minimize potential losses.

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