

**CASTLEOAK SECURITIES STRENGTHENS ITS CAPITAL MARKETS TEAM WITH
FIVE SEASONED PROFESSIONALS**

-- CastleOak Raises \$17.2 Billion in Second Half of 2008 --

New York, NY – (October 23, 2008) – CastleOak Securities, L.P., a leading minority-owned investment bank, announced today the hiring of five seasoned professionals, adding further strength to its capital markets team.

“Individually, each new hire brings a valuable depth of knowledge; as a group, they add over 80 years of combined experience to our fixed income capabilities,” said David R. Jones, President and CEO of CastleOak. “During these most challenging of times in the financial markets, CastleOak takes great pride in bringing value-added experience to our client base, and providing employment opportunities to top notch talent. These new hires are timely and necessary as we continue to grow our business,” he added.

Joining CastleOak’s Investment Banking team is Michael Turner. Mr. Turner brings over 20 years of experience and will serve as Managing Director. Prior to CastleOak, he held similar positions at Blaylock & Company and Prudential Securities. Mr. Turner holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and a B.S. from the University of Virginia.

Joining CastleOak’s Fixed Income Sales team with over 60 years of combined experience are Jeffrey Bates, Franklin Sacks and Len Bilancione as Managing Directors, and Christopher Dirkes as Vice President.

In the second half of 2008, CastleOak has assisted its clients in raising over \$17.2 billion, most notably by serving as co-manager on transactions for General Electric, American Express and MetLife. “All of CastleOak’s recent transactions highlight our ability to continue being value added to our clients despite tumultuous markets,” said Mr. Jones.

About CastleOak Securities, L.P.

CastleOak Securities, L.P. is a leading minority-owned investment bank with an extensive suite of financial services including equity sales and trading, fixed income sales and trading, and financial advisory services. The firm offers clients expertise in primary and secondary market transactions, advice on mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, valuations and general strategic assessments. Based in New York, with regional offices in Chicago and Atlanta, CastleOak is managed by a team of seasoned investment bankers who provide innovative, client-driven solutions that leverage their extensive professional experience, strong institutional relationships and keen market insight.

For more information, please visit www.castleoaklp.com.

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