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TOPIC: POLICOM Corporation Releases 2011 Economic Strength Rankings.

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Cold Climate Communities Gain in Economic Strength

With an average low temperature of 3 degrees during the month of January, the Sioux Falls, SD metropolitan area has shoved its way to becoming the 10th strongest local economy in the United States according to POLICOM Corporation's annual economic strength rankings.

Fargo, ND, an even colder area with an average low of -2 degrees in January, climbed the snow pile to become the 23rd strongest area among the nation's 366 metropolitan areas.

POLICOM annually ranks the 366 Metropolitan Statistical Areas and 576 Micropolitan Statistical Areas in the United States for "economic strength" to enable POLICOM to study the characteristics of strong and weak economies in the country.

To virtually no one's surprise, the Washington, DC metropolitan area ranked #1 in the study. With the federal government as its economic anchor, it has been virtually immune to the national recession.

Durango, CO is top among the 576 "Micropolitan" areas. Micropolitan areas are smaller economies and do not have city with a population greater than 50,000 people. They are typically one county and their economies fluctuate much more than the larger metropolitan areas according to POLICOM.

Metropolitan areas must have a city of at least 50,000 people and are typically more than one county.

"The top rated areas have had rapid, consistent growth in both size and quality for an extended period of time," William H. Fruth, President of POLICOM. POLICOM, located in Palm City, FL, specializes in analyzing local and state economies.

"The rankings do not reflect the latest 'hotspot' or boom town, but the areas which have the best economic foundation," Fruth continued. "While most communities have slowed or declined during this recession, the strongest areas have been able to weather the storm."

Texas placed four communities, Austin, Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, in the top 20, leading all states.

The study measures 23 different economic factors over a twenty-year period to create the rankings. The formulas determine how an economy has behaved over an extended period of time. Data stretching from 1990 to 2009 was used for this study.

POLICOM has created this study each year since 1997.

For the economic strength rankings for all areas, go to www.policom.com.

The following are the 10 strongest Metropolitan and Micropolitan areas.

2011 Ten Strongest among 366 Metropolitan Areas

- 1 Washington-Arlington, VA
- 2 Salt Lake City, UT
- 3 Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA
- 4 Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX
- 5 Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX
- 6 Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA
- 7 Olympia, WA
- 8 Nashville, TN
- 9 Denver-Aurora-Broomfield, CO
- 10 Sioux Falls, SD

2011 Ten Strongest among 576 Micropolitan Areas

- 1 Durango, CO
- 2 Helena, MT
- 3 Gillette, WY
- 4 Concord, NH
- 5 Lexington Park, MD
- 6 Hilton Head Island-Beaufort, SC
- 7 Bozeman, MT
- 8 Lebanon, NH-VT
- 9 Edwards, CO
- 10 Kahului-Wailuku, HI