

STERLING FINANCIAL CORP /WA/  
 Form 3  
 November 24, 2010

**FORM 3 UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION**  
**Washington, D.C. 20549**

OMB APPROVAL

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**INITIAL STATEMENT OF BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES**

Filed pursuant to Section 16(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934,  
 Section 17(a) of the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935 or Section  
 30(h) of the Investment Company Act of 1940

(Print or Type Responses)

1. Name and Address of Reporting Person \*  
 THL Equity Advisors VI, LLC

(Last) (First) (Middle)

C/O THOMAS H. LEE PARTNERS, L.P., 100 FEDERAL STREET, 35TH FLOOR

(Street)

BOSTON, MA 02110

(City) (State) (Zip)

2. Date of Event Requiring Statement  
 (Month/Day/Year)  
 08/26/2010

3. Issuer Name and Ticker or Trading Symbol  
 STERLING FINANCIAL CORP /WA/ [STSA]

4. Relationship of Reporting Person(s) to Issuer

(Check all applicable)

Director  10% Owner  
 Officer  Other  
 (give title below) (specify below)

5. If Amendment, Date Original Filed(Month/Day/Year)

6. Individual or Joint/Group Filing(Check Applicable Line)  
 Form filed by One Reporting Person  
 Form filed by More than One Reporting Person

**Table I - Non-Derivative Securities Beneficially Owned**

1. Title of Security (Instr. 4)	2. Amount of Securities Beneficially Owned (Instr. 4)	3. Ownership Form: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 5)	4. Nature of Indirect Beneficial Ownership (Instr. 5)
Common Stock	854,575,000 <sup>(1)</sup>	I	See Footnote <sup>(2)</sup>

Reminder: Report on a separate line for each class of securities beneficially owned directly or indirectly.

SEC 1473 (7-02)

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**Table II - Derivative Securities Beneficially Owned (e.g., puts, calls, warrants, options, convertible securities)**

1. Title of Derivative Security	2. Date Exercisable and Expiration Date	3. Title and Amount of Securities Underlying	4. Conversion	5. Ownership	6. Nature of Indirect Beneficial
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(Instr. 4)	(Month/Day/Year)		Derivative Security (Instr. 4)	or Exercise Price of Derivative Security	Form of Derivative Security: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 5)	Ownership (Instr. 5)
	Date Exercisable	Expiration Date	Title	Amount or Number of Shares		
Warrant	10/21/2010	08/26/2017	Common Stock	86,625,000 (1)	\$ 0.22 (3)	I See Footnote (2)

## Reporting Owners

Reporting Owner Name / Address	Relationships			
	Director	10% Owner	Officer	Other
THL Equity Advisors VI, LLC C/O THOMAS H. LEE PARTNERS, L.P. 100 FEDERAL STREET, 35TH FLOOR BOSTON, MA 02110	^	^ X	^	^

## Signatures

/s/ Charles P. Holden, Managing Director 11/22/2010

Signature of Reporting Person

Date

## Explanation of Responses:

\* If the form is filed by more than one reporting person, see Instruction 5(b)(v).

\*\* Intentional misstatements or omissions of facts constitute Federal Criminal Violations. See 18 U.S.C. 1001 and 15 U.S.C. 78ff(a).

(1) Represents securities of the Issuer held directly by Thomas H. Lee Equity Fund VI, L.P. ("Equity"), Thomas H. Lee Parallel Fund VI, L.P. ("Parallel"), Thomas H. Lee Equity Parallel (DT) Fund VI, L.P. ("DT"), and THL Sterling Equity Investors L.P. ("Sterling", and together with Equity, Parallel and DT, the "Funds").

(2) The reporting person is the general partner of each of the Funds. As such, the reporting person may be deemed to beneficially own the shares of the Issuer owned directly by each of the Funds. The reporting person disclaims beneficial ownership of such shares, and this report shall not be deemed an admission that the reporting person is the beneficial owner of the securities for the purpose of Section 16 or for any other purpose, except to the extent of his pecuniary interest therein.

(3) The Warrant is exercisable, in whole or part, to purchase 86,625,000 shares of Common Stock., subject to adjustments for certain issuances of common stock, stock splits, stock subdivisions, stock reclassifications, stock combinations, other distributions, certain repurchases, business combinations and similar actions.

Note: File three copies of this Form, one of which must be manually signed. If space is insufficient, See Instruction 6 for procedure.

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