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**CEO Column: The Power of State Press Associations**

*By David Chavern, president & CEO, NAA*

Associations have a unique power to convene and create communities. As president and CEO of the Newspaper Association of America, I believe in the ability of associations to serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas that will propel us forward. In this time of revolution and change, state press associations have a critical role to play in this exchange, and after visiting with four of them recently, I am even more convinced of the importance of state press associations to achieving industry-wide goals.

State press associations are on the ground engaging with local publishers, acting as their voice in larger conversations and making sure they’re benefiting from the knowledge sharing and innovation taking place throughout the industry.

I recently visited with the [Illinois](http://www.illinoispress.org/), [New York](http://nynewspapers.com/), [Texas](http://texaspress.com/) and [Louisiana](http://www.lapress.com/) press associations and saw first-hand the amazing work they are doing in and out of their communities. These powerhouses gather input from their members and keep a pulse on the industry. People talk about consolidation in the media, but the newspaper industry is much more diverse than most people think. The Texas Press Association membership alone is composed of 463 publications, consisting of 75 dailies and 388 non-dailies.

State press associations harness the power of their members. In election years, they serve as intermediaries between law makers and publishers. Last year, the Illinois Press Association, standing for 500 daily and weekly newspapers, joined the Illinois Automobile Dealers Association, the Illinois Broadcasters Association and the Outdoor Advertising Association of Illinois in the fight against an advertising tax that, if it had passed, would have produced nearly $38 million a year in tax dollars. Several members of the press association [ran editorials against the tax](http://www.noadtaxillinois.com/news.php).

Likewise, NAA is committed to continuing to work closely with state press associations to solve real world operational problems for news organizations. While visiting with these organizations, I received a lot of questions and comments from them regarding the Department of Labor’s new [overtime rules](http://www.naa.org/Public-Policy/Government-Affairs/Business-Operations/DOL-Overtime-Ruling.aspx), an issue NAA has been working on for months alongside a broad coalition of small businesses, nonprofits and universities. Despite an undesirable outcome, NAA is continuing to help our members through offering a [webinar](http://www.naa.org/About-NAA/Events/Archives/2016/Changes-in-DOL-Overtime-Rules.aspx), held on July 12, with experts from Littler Mendelson, who provided detailed guidance on the new overtime requirements and practical steps on how news media companies can respond to the changes to the Rule.

The work being done at the national level on this and other public policy issues is important to the state press associations, too, and we are glad to be able to help these organizations, who help us by keeping an ear to the ground at the state and local levels.

Moving forward, we are counting on our partners as we tackle issues like the proposed advertising tax, for which [47 states showed opposition](http://www.naa.org/News-and-Media/Press-Center/Archives/2014/Press-Associations-Urge-Senate-Finance-Committee-to-Drop-Advertising-Tax-Proposal.aspx) in 2014, and ad blocking, to ensure news organizations’ rights continue to be preserved.