

How Column Simplified Statewide Notice Placement

When the Kansas state legislature passes a constitutional amendment, state law requires that notification of the change be distributed via the media in each of Kansas's 105 counties. This is just one among many public notice requirements that exist in Kansas — but placing a notice with 105 newspapers is uniquely challenging.

Lori Jackson, Advertising Administrative Assistant at the Kansas Press Association, is responsible for ensuring that each county's legal newspaper publishes constitutional amendments. Before Column introduced bulk notice placement, Lori said that placing these notices was a time-consuming and frustrating process.

First, the Kansas Secretary of State would send Lori the text of the amendment. Lori usually formatted the notice herself. Then she used her database of advertising rates to determine the cost of publishing the amendment in each newspaper. Finally, Lori would send the notice with "insertion orders" to all 105 newspapers, and she waited for newspapers to confirm that they were actually going to publish it.

"The papers won't get back to me to tell me they've received it, so I have to call them or email them," Lori said. "It's a long process, because some papers are really good at letting me know, and other papers I have to chase down."

Once the constitutional amendment was published, Lori completed the process by organizing payment and gathering proof of publication (either affidavits or tear sheets) from each newspaper.

"That's another very long, cumbersome process that I go through, trying to get all that information from the newspapers," Lori explained.

From formatting the amendment to overseeing payment, Lori could spend several weeks placing a single statewide notice. Unless she constantly called and emailed individual newspapers throughout the placement process, Lori could not be sure that this important information reached the people of Kansas.

Solution: Bulk Placement via Column

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the KPA used bulk placement via Column to publish a public health-related notice in dozens of newspapers across Kansas. With Column, the statewide placement process took only minutes to complete.

How does bulk placement work? First, the notice placer uploads their notice content into Column. Then, they select dates and newspapers for publication. Column indicates which newspapers publish on the dates specified, along with the circulation and county of each newspaper. There's no limit to how many publications the notice placer can select.

Once the notice is submitted, Column offers tracking dashboards to monitor the status of each publication. At a glance, the notice placer can see how many newspapers have confirmed receipt, generated invoices, and submitted affidavits. Meanwhile, the notice table contains details about the status and documentation associated with individual newspapers.

Column doesn't just make it faster and easier to place statewide notices — the platform also centralizes information, eliminating the need to juggle discreet publication cycles for a single public notice.

Impact: Increase Efficiency and Confidence

Back at the Kansas Press Association, executive director Emily Bradbury said that placing the COVID-19 statewide notice via Column went "smoothly," greatly reducing Lori's workload.

"It allowed us to focus on other things," Emily said.

Going forward, Emily and Lori are eager to continue using bulk placement via Column. The new process dramatically cuts the time and effort required to place notices like constitutional amendments in many newspapers across the state.

"It's going to really streamline our association's processes," Emily said.

Doug Anstaett, consultant and legislative lobbyist for the Kansas Press Association, added that Column increases the association's confidence that newspapers publish public notices as requested — and as legally required.

"There's more direct contact between the placer and the newspaper ... and we hope that's going to increase the accuracy of the placement," Doug said.

Lori also emphasized the importance of confirming that newspapers have received and published constitutional amendments. By automatically tracking confirmation statuses, invoices and affidavits, Column reduces the burden of calling and emailing 105 newspapers across Kansas at various stages of the statewide placement process.

"I'm excited to keep using Column," Lori said. "I think it's a great tool that is making it so much more efficient, and I'm very excited about it."