TAX TIME THURSDAYS: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

PAHEADRA ROBINSON, SENIOR POLICY CONSULTANT
SOUTHERN RURAL BLACK WOMEN’S INITIATIVE
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SOUTHERN RURAL BLACK WOMEN’S INITIATIVE

The Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative for Economic and Social Justice (SRBWII) is a 501c3 Human Rights organization, formed in 2001 to address historical race, class, cultural, religious and gender barriers faced by Black women and young women in the rural U.S. South.
COVERAGE AREAS

- 77 Counties across 3 states
- **Children’s Defense Fund Southern Regional Office**

  - **Bama Kids, Inc.**
    P.O. Box 212
    Camden, Alabama 36726
    Phone 334.682.5925
    Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews

  - **Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education, Inc.**
    P.O. Box 1933
    Albany, GA 31702
    Phone 229.432.5799
    Shirley Sherrod

  - **Children’s Defense Fund Southern Regional Office**
    P.O. Box 11437
    Jackson, MS 39283
    Phone 601.321.1966
    Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald
RURAL POPULATION

- 97% of the country’s land mass is rural but only 19.3% of the population lives there.
- About 60 Million people, or one in five Americans, live in rural America.
CHALLENGES

• Distance between residents and communities
• Broadband challenges
• Brain Drain
• Availability
• Resistance to change
CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

People of Influence
Efforts to Engage
Scan
Issues
APPROACH

- Grassroots organizing
  - relationship building
  - issue identification
  - local action
- Grass tops
  - assess their position
  - ascertain what actions are needed
SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES

• Traditional and progressive outreach
• Learn the community
• Listen to the advice given
• Follow through and be consistent
• Engage youth voice
• Give autonomy; no paternalism
Paheadra B. Robinson, Esq.
Senior Policy Consultant
Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative

paheadra@brattongroupllc.com

(601)955-4213