**(WASHINGTON)**--- Congressman Allen West (R-FL) chaired a hearing entitled ***"Sinking the Marine Industry:  How Regulations are Affecting Today's Martime Business"*** as part of the House Small Business Subcommittee on Investigations, Oversight and Regulations Thursday on Capitol Hill. Inland waterways and ports are often the lifeblood of the economies of the regions in which they are located. Members of Congress heard testimony from experts and small business owners on the most pressing impediments to job creation and economic growth in the maritime industry and discussed solutions to those problems.

West's constituent, Kristina Hebert, Chief Operating Officer, Ward's Marine Electric, Inc,. in Fort Lauderdale, testified on behalf of the United States Superyacht Association. Hebert, whose family business has been in operation since trhe 1950's, has many concerns, in particular the regulations imposed on the maritime industry through the Longshore and Harbor Workers Compensation Act.

"The new rules have created confusion in both the recreational marine repair industry and the insurance industry," Hebert said. "The misapplication of the exemption brought thousands of workers under the duplicative coverage or even worse left them without any coverage at all. For these reasons, the rulemaking seriously missed the mark and will serve only to cost American jobs and drive economic activity offshore."

The hearing allowed for a wide-ranging examination of regulatory actions by the Department of Labor, the planning and permitting processes for the United States Army Corps of Engineers maintenance of navigable waterways, and intra-state taxation of small businesses.

"Representing a sizeable chunk of our working population, I see no better time to zero in on the industry which is paramount to our way of life in South Florida and throughout the nation," West said. "I have heard from many in the marine industry in South Florida who say regulations are creating a toxic business environment for them. Builders, manufacturers, retailers, craftsmen, technicians and suppliers-- they all have the same frustration- the federal government preventing them from hiring and growing their businesses."

For a full copy of Hebert's testimony and the other maritime employers who testified at the hearing today, click here.

For video coverage of today's testimony, click here.

For complete photo gallery of today's hearing, click here.

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