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Eager to push the nation in a different direction, Congressman Allen West plans to reverse some long-standing positions taken by South Florida leaders and pursue new ways to boost the economy.

West wants to limit emergency unemployment benefits, scale back Social Security to keep it solvent and allow offshore oil drilling close enough to Florida shores so emergency crews can cap potential spills. He already fulfilled one campaign promise by voting to repeal the new health care law.

After three weeks in office, the tea-party favorite from Plantation will face voters at his first town hall meetings on Thursday in Deerfield Beach and on Monday in Boynton Beach.

In a wide-ranging interview, he previewed his agenda on issues that have special impact on Florida.

### IMMIGRATION REFORM

West, unlike most South Florida members of both parties, opposes any path to legal status for those who reside here illegally, including those brought as children.

"You've got to enforce the law," he said. "Before considering the DREAM Act (to allow children of illegal immigrants to remain) or any of this other pie-in-the-sky stuff, you've got to do those things."

"You've got a war going on south of our border. Beheadings. Mass killings. Mexico is starting to resemble Iraq and Afghanistan. And if we don't secure the borders and enforce our laws, if we do not make employment verification mandatory all across this country, we will never be serious about tackling the immigration problems we have."

### SOCIAL SECURITY

West believes that politicians hijacked Social Security by using its trust fund to finance government spending. And he notes projections that the program is headed for insolvency in

the next few decades.

West said Congress should consider further raising the eligibility age for full benefits and possibly apply a means test.

"Donald Trump is not going to need Social Security or Medicare in his life," he said. "We need to make sure that these programs are targeted to people who really do need them, and not just have a blanket policy for everyone."

### UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

West opposes the extension of special unemployment benefits during this time of extraordinary joblessness, when Florida's unemployment rate rose to 12 percent.

"I don't believe that unemployment checks are the means by which you stimulate the economy," he said.

"I would say instead of extending unemployment benefits for another 13 months, let's just extend them through winter. We should take care of the American people through what may be some very hard times in the winter. Coming into the spring, we have got to come up with the right kind of economic policies that spur growth."

### OFFSHORE DRILLING

West wants to expand domestic oil supplies while developing solar power and other alternatives. That includes more offshore drilling.

Energy experts say offshore drilling would have little impact on gas prices. But West said more drilling would make the nation less dependent on foreign supplies and no longer compelled to "send money to people [abroad] who want to see us killed."

He brushed off the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico last summer as "an isolated incident." Rather than push rigs into deeper waters, West wants to bring them close to shore.

"We need to make sure it's close enough so we don't have what happened in the Gulf, where [the leaking well] was so deep we couldn't get out there and take the emergency procedures to rectify that type of spill."

## TAXES

West says cutting business taxes and red tape would lead to jobs. That includes cutting the corporate tax rate from the current top rate of 35 percent to 22 percent.

Tax cuts would add to the federal deficit, but West said they would spur growth in the long run.

"We can have tax cuts," he said. "But we cannot have this exorbitant growth of the bureaucratic nanny state."