

BOCA RATON — Freshman U.S. Rep. Allen West, R-Plantation, highlighted some areas where he has disagreed with House Speaker John Boehner during a town hall meeting tonight, but said he's "comfortable enough" with his party's legislative leader.

West and other tea party-backed freshmen pushed for deeper spending cuts than Boehner and Republican leaders initially favored this year. And West tonight reminded the audience of about 200 at Lynn University that he recently went against Boehner in votes on the Patriot Act and the U.S. role in Libya.

West voted against extending the Patriot Act, citing concerns about roving wiretaps and other provisions. West also was one of 10 Republicans to vote against a Boehner resolution criticizing U.S. involvement in Libya. West instead voted for a stronger measure by liberal Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, calling for an end to U.S. involvement.

"I'm a freshman member of Congress, but that doesn't mean I'm a rookie. I have some life experiences," West said in response to an audience question about his relationship with GOP leaders. "You did not send me to Washington, D.C., to be a lemming."

But in response to another question specifically about Boehner, West said, "I'm comfortable enough with Speaker Boehner. There are some instances where we disagree. I think that he's doing the best he can do in a very tough situation."

The 90-minute meeting didn't feature any of either the heckling or the disruptions that marked West's meetings in April and May after he voted for a GOP Medicare overhaul plan.

As is often the case at West's meetings, he was asked about running for president in 2012.

"Don't rush me into something before I am really ready," West said. "I don't want to be a cult of personality. I don't want to be an American-Idol type candidate."

West also said he hasn't chosen a candidate to back for the GOP presidential nomination, but said, "In the Republican Party, they cannot continue to believe in leadership by entitlement."

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