

West's record belies his extremist reputation.

In his first session, Rep. Allen West (R) "discovered nuance in politics. Whether it's a spending bill, a debt-limit vote or a flood insurance measure, West has proved to be more ideologically dynamic and flexible than any of his caricaturists imagined, undermining his reputation as a tea party iconoclast while eliciting deep sighs of relief from" House GOP leadership.

"That's not to say he's fallen into lock step with them" nor has he "cooled off the bombastic, sometimes cringe-inducing remarks. ... But look beyond the incendiary rhetoric, and focus on the policy votes and insider maneuvering, and a different picture of West emerges. He's been surprisingly loyal" to GOP leaders "on some key issues. He keeps them apprised of where he stands on votes and largely refrains from taking to the airwaves to slam his own party. ... He was one of the leadership's most emphatic proponents in the debt ceiling fight, stepping forward each day to back up its efforts in front of expectant scrums of television news cameras."

"Heritage Action for America's legislative scorecard ... gives West" a 74% rating, with 76% "on his voting record" and 33% on "sponsorship of legislation. By comparison, fellow freshmen" Reps. Tim Huelskamp (R-KS) and Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-SC) have ratings of 93%. Mulvaney: "I've given him a hard time about the fact that he's owned by leadership. Allen has voted his own way. ... It's never squishy. It's either, I am really for it, or I am dead set against it. And I appreciate that."

"In short, West is either far more politically astute than his opponents gave him credit for or remarkably unconcerned with the ramifications of saying what he thinks. Or both."

West, in an interview: "It's kind of like there was a new, shiny toy, a little lab rat that you wanted to poke and prod and figure out: 'It's a black conservative here in Washington, D.C..'. The people that try to treat you as some kind of oddity, that's something I'm not really concerned about. ... Most people had this perception of me, coming up here and now, at a certain point, they've had to stop and say, that's not really who this guy is if you sit down and talk to him."

Rep. John Mica (R-07): "He's like a rock star. I've been here 19 years, and nobody knows who

the hell I am. But everybody knows who he is."

Rep. Cory Gardner (R-CO): "Allen West is passionate about his beliefs. Political opponents and opportunists try to equate passion with being on the fringe" (Cogan, Politico, 12/6).

Born To Run Faster

"West was hurting after completing a half-marathon in West Palm Beach" on Dec. 4. West, on Facebook: "At 50 yrs old I'm still keepin' up, but I'm doggone tired, going to rest & take aspirin lol."

West "crossed the finish line in 2:05:49, according to the Palm Beach Post. Asked if he was aiming for a faster time, West told the paper, 'How about a buck forty nine?'"

http://www.nationaljournal.com/member/hotline/already-famous-20111208?mrefid=site_search