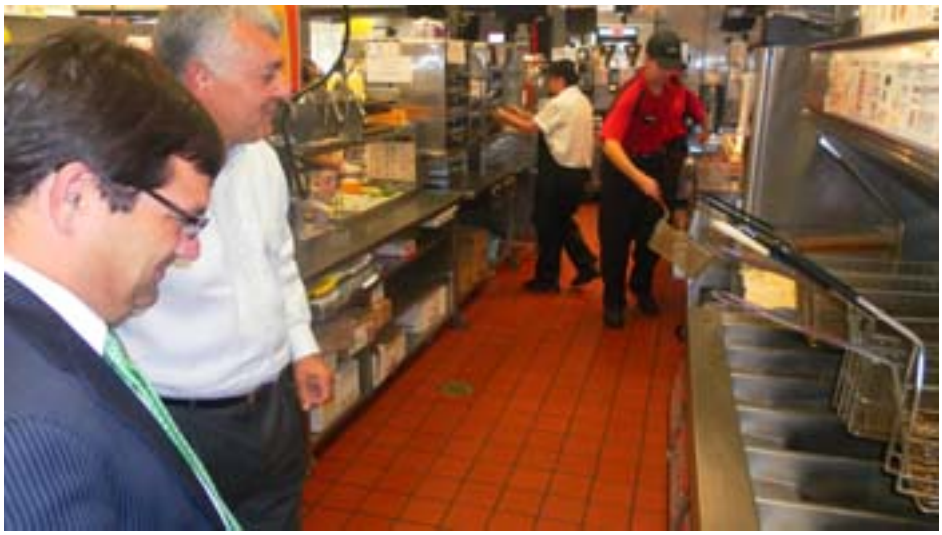
In honor of National Small Business Week (May 16-20), Gus met with several Tampa-area business owners to hear from them how the federal government affects their bottom line and to discuss how to best help small business in the Tampa area.

One of Gus' first visits was with McCormick Stevenson, a mechanical engineering and design company based in Clearwater that has eight employees. He also met with two McDonald's franchise owners, including a third-generation owner who now owns 51 restaurants in the Tampa area.

Some of the solutions Gus heard from the franchise and business owners he met with last week include reducing federal regulatory burdens and lowering the tax burden on businesses so they can grow, invest, and innovate.

Gus firmly believes that small business owners are the backbone of the nation's economy. The success of small businesses will be the key to breaking record rates of unemployment and lifting the economy out of its current malaise.

The crucial need to support small businesses is why Gus recently cosponsored Rep. Allen West's (FL) Small Business Encouragement Act, which would allow small businesses a work opportunity tax credit for hiring unemployed individuals as full-time employees in 2012 and 2013.