more oil offshore and in Alaska. But once again environmental extremists who almost always are very wealthy people do not want us drilling for any more oil.

Some of these extremists even have said that they think our oil prices should be two or three times higher than they are so that more people will be forced to use mass transit. But this would really be harmful and would put the final nail in the coffin of some of our small towns and some of our rural areas where mass transit is not available and where people have to drive sometimes long distances to get to good jobs. Do we really want to force more people into our big cities that are already overcrowded and where more pollution occurs? If we want lower prices for everything and more good jobs, we need more domestic oil production.

The very misnamed Arctic Wildlife Refuge, which has 19.8 million acres of land in Alaska, could produce many billions more barrels of oil if we would just allow drilling on far less than 1 percent of its territory. Most of this refuge is nothing but a frozen, huge brown tundra that does not have a bush or a tree on it or at least not one within many, many miles. If we opened up only 12,000 acres, far less than 1 percent of this refuge, we could get to billions of barrels of oil; and it could be done in an environmentally safe way and without hurting even a single animal or cutting even one tree. Yet once again wealthy environmental extremists do not want us to do this, even though their actions are hurting the poor and working people of this country most of all and are also helping keep young college graduates from getting good, high-paying jobs.

These are just some things that I hope many people in this country and in particular my colleagues here in the Congress will consider in the months ahead.

STOP SPLINTERING FAMILIES; START APPLYING AMERICAN FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say that we must stop the splintering of American families that resulted from the so-called immigration reform act passed in 1996. We must stop deporting hardworking legal, I repeat, legal immigrants who are raising stable families only because they committed a minor infraction years or even decades ago. We must stop hauling away parents in the middle of the night in front of their children, and we must stop denying these people now in detention the most basic constitutional rights that we in America believe everyone should have.

Yet that is exactly what the 1996 immigration law does. It redefines the term ''aggravated felony,'' which sounds so horrible to cover virtually every crime ever committed. It is retroactive, covering crimes decades ago. It denies basic constitutional protections such as bail and visitation rights. Again, I repeat, we are talking about legal immigrants, immigrants residing in this country in a legal fashion.

The law that was passed in 1996 removes the authority of immigration judges to take into account a person's contributions to our society as well as any past misdeeds. The law removes Federal judges' oversight over the immigration process. It allows INS, Immigration and Naturalization Service, deportation officials to pick someone up after they apply for citizenship, put them in detention maybe in the middle of the night without their relatives knowing where they were and hold them without bail. Mr. Speaker, this is America. This has to stop. We must start to restore justice and fairness to immigration proceedings.

Let me just give my colleagues a few examples of how this law is splintering families in the San Diego area. Just yesterday, I received a letter from 13-year-old Aida. Her father had always been a good provider; but in the middle of the night, he was picked up by the INS, handcuffed in front of his children and deported. Now his family has to rely on welfare.

Allan is 34 years old and came to the United States when he was 16. He was arrested for grand theft in his 20s and served a 3-year sentence. But today, many years later, he faces deportation despite doctors' diagnoses of attention deficit disorder and possibly Tourette's syndrome. Several doctors said he should be treated for mental illness rather than being incarcerated further for crimes for which he has already paid his price.

Juan, who is 44, has been in the United States since he was a young man. He was convicted of drunken driving and served 7 months of a year sentence. This sentence was expunged from his record by California courts, but still the INS picked him up at his home at 2 in the morning. He served more time in detention while waiting for deportation than he did for his original DUI.

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, this is America. Here we do not allow unconstitutional actions. Here, actions do have consequences; but we have a system of checks and balances to ensure that no branch of government can ride roughshod over our rights.

Mr. Speaker, I propose to roll back the draconian provisions of this 1996 law. My own bill, H.R. 3272, the Keeping Families Together Act, would do the following, and I repeat, this is for legal immigrants. It would restore the previous definition of aggravated felon so people would not be dragged into jail for very minor crimes. It eliminates the retroactivity sections so minor crimes from decades ago are not counted against the immigrant. It restores previous standards so as to allow a judge to take into account community ties before deciding on deportation. It eases mandatory detention requirements for immigrants who have completed their sentences or probation. It reinstates the authority of Federal courts to review immigration matters. And it does ensure, Mr. Speaker, that murderers, rapists, and terrorists, true aggravated felons, the people we want to deport, would still be deported.

Mr. Speaker, we need to start here. We need to start to restore fairness so that our Pledge of Allegiance truly means with liberty and justice for all. We must stop the practices that would shame anyone who reveres our constitutional system.

LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in celebration of another year of independence for Lithuania. While some may consider this the 10th anniversary of the day many brave Lithuanians faced the Soviet tanks to restore freedom, it is truly the 82nd anniversary of Lithuanian Independence Day. As a Lithuanian American, I am proud of my ancestry and what Lithuania stands for, such as resilience, determination, tenacity and pride. What I find especially promising about the Lithuanian people is how far they have come after reestablishing independence just 10 years ago.

Today, Lithuania is a vibrant economic power in central Europe. In 1998, Lithuania had the lowest inflation rate in Central and Eastern Europe and privatized 344 companies. I am sure that the 1999 numbers will be just as encouraging. Additionally, Lithuania continues to contribute to the security of the Baltic region by implementing key defense programs and priorities.

First of all, the Seimas has already approved a 10-year defense spending program which will reach 2.5 percent of the GDP by 2005. This increase in spending will ensure that appropriate equipment will be procured and critical troop reforms will be made. The additional spending will also secure Lithuanian interoperability with NATO forces. While Lithuania already participates in some NATO forces, interoperability will again prove Lithuania's readiness to join NATO as a full-fledged member.

However, entrance into NATO and defense spending are only one aspect of such a diverse country. Trade, economic development, and foreign investment will help to strengthen Lithuania not only in Europe but across the globe. Today, out of the top 10 foreign investors in Lithuania, only three are American companies: Williams, Phillip Morris, and Coca-Cola. As the government continues to privatize industries and services throughout the country,

American companies must make the first step and begin investments. Right now Lithuania is an untapped resource of money, goods and a capable workforce. The possibilities are endless as to what can be done in this burgeoning economy. The United States and Lithuania must work together to encourage this investment. The possibilities are too great for American companies to miss by sitting on the sidelines.

Again, I would like to congratulate the Lithuanian people on not only their independence but on the strides they have made over the last 10 years to make their country what it is today. Through continued perseverance, they have shown in the past Lithuania will be an outstanding addition to NATO and an economic powerhouse in central Europe.

TALIBAN ATROCITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), in speaking out for equality, equal opportunity, freedom of choice, and freedom to live. There was once a time when these words were only meaningful to men. However, more than 50 years ago, the universal declaration of human rights declared once and for all the principle of equality for women and men around the world. Then why is it that in the year 2000, the beginning of the year and the decade of hope and advancement and greater opportunity that there is an entire population of women who still live in constant fear and violent oppression?

Since 1996, the Taliban, an extremist militia, has seized control of 90 percent of Afghanistan and then unilaterally declared an end to women's basic human rights. Women are banished from working, girls are not allowed to attend school beyond the eighth grade, women are beaten for not fully covering themselves, including their eyes and ankles. Women and girls are not allowed to go out into public without being covered from head to toe with a heavy and cumbersome garment and escorted by a close male relative. Women are not allowed to seek health care, even in emergency situations, from male doctors. The Taliban has allowed some women to practice medicine, but women must do so fully covered and in sectioned-off special wards. And even these services are only available in very few select locations, leaving women to die from otherwise treatable diseases.

A 16-year-old girl was stoned to death because she went out in public with a man who was not her family member. A woman who was teaching girls in her home was also stoned to death in front of her husband, children, and students. An elderly woman was beaten, breaking her leg, because she exposed an ankle. These are atrocious actions and they are real. They are happening now. They will continue tomorrow as long as the extremist Taliban government is still in control.

The restriction on women's freedom in Afghanistan is not understandable to most Americans. Women and girls cannot venture outside without a burqa, a heavy and expensive restrictive garment, that covers the entire body, including mesh over the eyes. For some women, not having the means to afford and purchase this expensive garment will banish them to their homes for the rest of their lives.

The effects of this decree have been severe. Many Afghan women are widows and have no means of income because they cannot work. And unless they have a close male member in their family, they have no access to society for food, for their families and for themselves.

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It is no wonder that under these conditions, the Feminist Majority Foundation reports that the Physicians for Human Rights found that 97 percent of Afghan women show signs of major depression.

I join my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), in condemning the Taliban regime. We must continue to speak out against the Taliban, on behalf of the women and girls that risk death for speaking out for themselves.

We must not accept the Taliban as a legitimate government.

We must send a strong and clear message that gender apartheid is unacceptable and a gross violation of the most basic human rights.

Afghanistan may be physically located on the other side of the world, but the voices of the women and girls suffering there are heard loud and clear here.

I urge my colleagues to continue their support of the women and girls in Afghanistan by cosponsoring my resolution, H. Res. 187, to prevent any Taliban led government from obtaining a seat in the United Nations, and refused any attempt to recognize any Afghan government, while gross violations of human rights persist against women and girls.

In closing, I want to share with you an excerpt from a poem written by Zieba Shorish-Shamley called "A poem dedicated to my Afghan Sisters":

I remember you . . .
When you have no choice, no voice, no rights, no existence
When you have no laughs, no joy, no freedom, no resistance
Your pain, your agony, your silence, your loneliness
Your anger, your frustration, your cries, your unhappiness

To the women of Afghanistan I say, we remember you, we will not forget you, we will fight for you!

NOT ALL AMERICANS EXPERIENCING THE SAME PROSPERITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, when the President delivered his State of the Union address on January 27, he touted the unprecedented prosperity of the Nation. He pointed to the fast economic growth and the lowest unemployment rates in 30 years.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in all areas of the country. In some parts of the Fifth District of Virginia, which I represent, we have experienced significant job losses and unemployment rates that are three to five times greater than the State average. The job losses are the result of textile plant closings and the decline of the apparel manufacturing industry in Southside Virginia and throughout the Nation.

Martinsville and Henry County, Virginia, used to be known as the "sweatshirt capital of the world," but with the recent loss of over 3,000 apparel manufacturing jobs, that title will no longer be applicable. Recent figures show that the unemployment rate in Martinsville for the month of December was 19.6 percent, and the unemployment rate for surrounding Henry County was 11.6 percent. Neighboring counties, including my home county of Franklin, also have seen textile plants close and unemployment rates increase.

The people who have lost their jobs are able and willing workers. Many in the community were concerned when NAFTA was proposed, and they feared the impact that the agreement would have on their jobs and the local economy. Their fears and concerns have now been realized. Nearly all of the plant closings in the area have been certified by the Department of Labor as NAFTA impacted, making the workers eligible for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program and the NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance Program. Many have taken advantage of these programs which provide job training grants. With the help of the Virginia Employment Commission, many of them are enrolling in training programs. However, job training will be of little benefit to these people if there are no jobs available to them.

There is legislation that has been introduced in the House of Representatives which I believe would help these displaced workers and others like them around the country. H.R. 1967, the NAFTA Impact Relief Act introduced by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS), now has over 70 cosponsors. The NAFTA Impact Relief Act would provide tax incentives and grants to communities affected by the loss of businesses and jobs as a result of NAFTA.

I believe this measure is an example of what we need to try to do in order to assist adversely impacted localities in their efforts to create jobs and to get their economies on the same track as those sectors of the country which are enjoying more prosperous times.