them for the privilege of drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Today, some of us introduced legislation to prevent any future royalty holidays for the oil companies, to seek and direct the Minerals Management Service to renegotiate these leases so that it does include the provisions of a minimum of a trigger but hopefully even a better royalty policy than that, and if those companies do not want to cooperate with that renegotiation, then they should be barred from future bids on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Now, to their credit, some of the major oil companies are suggesting that, in fact, they do owe the royalties, that there is a trigger mechanism. But Kerr-McGee and apparently some other companies have decided that they are going to challenge the whole law. They believe they are not obligated to pay any of these royalties, there is no trigger in this law. If that is the case, the taxpayer is just going to be hung out to dry by the major oil companies, and the major oil companies are going to abscond with the natural resources that belong to the people of this country.

It is wrong and Congress ought to correct it.

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

(Mr. DREIER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WITNESS TO AFGHANISTAN'S PROGRESS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, while leading a congressional delegation to Afghanistan, I was struck by the progress that the Afghan Government is making toward establishing a democracy, as well as with the enthusiasm and the determination of the Afghan people to finally and deservedly live in a free society.

The purpose of this trip, which also included stops in Iraq and Kuwait, was for Members of Congress to see firsthand the efforts being made toward U.S. goals of bringing stability and democracy to these nations.

In Afghanistan, where the prospects for reform once looked bleak, a transformation has occurred which has resurrected freedom, established legitimate leadership, and reinvigorated the population.

It is difficult to imagine that a mere 5 years ago the Taliban government was thriving in this nation, exporting terrorism and promoting archaic extremism. Today media, cultural, business, and political leaders are free to meet, to discuss, to demonstrate and guide policies which are reforming their nation's economy, opening the political process, and liberating society from the fundamentalist laws which enslaved their nation.

This overwhelming progress has been made under leadership of President Hamid Karzai. Having met with President Karzai, I am assured that he is a capable and determined individual and he is able to continue to guide his nation into a transition to a modern democracy. To help facilitate this, Karzai and the Afghan Government are seeking to implement the Afghan Compact, which is a commitment to achieve specific goals relating to security, to the rule of law, to human rights, to economic development, to the elimination of narcotics trade within 5 years.

The task ahead remains difficult. It remains lengthy. But with the sustained help of the United States and other international donors and especially the demonstrated optimism and the resilience of the Afghan people, I am confident that the goals of this compact will be realized.

The progress being made in Afghanistan also has serious implications for our own Nation's security. Our congressional delegation conveyed to Afghan leaders that Congress remains deeply concerned about the mounting bloodshed in this Nation and over the ongoing narcotics trade which supplies over 90 percent of global opium and heroin.

My colleagues and I were also able to meet with high-ranking U.S. military officials, including Commanding General John Abizaid, to discuss the current military situation on the ground. I left impressed with our military's success against the insurgents and confident in our decisive victory over it.

Afghanistan was the first foreign front in our campaign to eradicate terrorism, and the success that we have had in eliminating the Taliban and establishing a democratic government is monumental and undeniable. In this area, however, our job is not complete, and America must not yield in our commitment to our troops and to their noble efforts. Standing side by side with its Afghan counterparts, our military will continue to actively seek out and destroy terror elements and work toward establishing complete stability and a transparent rule of law so that Afghanistan will never again be a safe haven for terrorists.

At a time when many are questioning the legitimacy of U.S. efforts abroad, Afghanistan serves as the perfect example of why our efforts to bring stability, freedom, and security are crucial, just, and attainable. Clearly, the new Afghanistan is emerging as one of our closest allies in our fight against extremists.

While meeting with the Speaker of the Afghan Parliament, he and I discussed the critical partnership which is developing between our two nations. Both nations are committed to furthering our alliance, which has already borne much fruit, with the knowledge that neither nation's goals will most effectively be realized without the friendship and deep cooperation of the other.

In our meeting, the Speaker expressed his hope that the Afghan people will serve as a ''bridge to democracy for other peoples of the region.''

I share the Afghan Speaker's hope, and I am confident that the inevitable spread of freedom and democracy will protect and preserve the American way of life here at home and make it available to those currently oppressed abroad.

The undeniable progress that continues to be made in Afghanistan makes peace, security, and prosperity all the more assured and protected—for Americans as well as Afghans.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment concurrent resolutions of the House of the following titles:

H. Con. Res. 71. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that there should be established a Caribbean-American Heritage Month.

H. Con. Res. 315. Concurrent resolution urging the President to issue a proclamation for the observance of an American Jewish History Month.

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

(Mr. WYNN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LIHEAP AND NATURAL GAS PRICES

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring attention tonight to an issue that both the House and the Senate have been debating. Low-income Americans are struggling to pay for heating bills this winter. Thankfully, this winter has not been as cold as expected, and heating bills have not increased as greatly as feared.

Less noticed, however, is that our low-income Americans also struggle to pay cooling bills. When the 90- and 100-