decide to put those criminals in jail for life, then they risk a financial penalty for giving their prisoners ''a second chance.'' And some prisoners, unlike Singleton, deserve a second chance—after they have paid their debt to society in full.

That's the crux of the problem. Prisoners locked up for despicable offenses are going to get out of jail, and many of them will not have served enough time for their crime. U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon's proposal would force states to put them away forever or pay the price.

The Arizona Republican has the support of parents of murder victims, including Fred Goldman, whose son Ron was killed with Nicole Brown Simpson, and Marc Klaas, whose daughter Polly was murdered by a repeat offender in California.

Whether we like it or not, released criminals roam from state to state. States have no recourse to prevent this immigration, even though one in seven repeat crimes occurs in a different state from the original offense.

Each year, according to Department of Justice studies, released killers drifting from one part of the country to another murder more than 100 people. Each year rapists cross state lines and claim 445 new victims. Each year these criminals cross state lines and sexually assault more than 1,200 people, including 935 children.

(And we don't have to remind you of the many bad actors who wend their way to the Sunshine State when winter looms.)

Critics of the proposal say the recidivism rate for these most heinous crimes is low, but some studies suggest these offenses are repeated more often than not. The critics complain that state laws already allow judges to put repeat offenders away for life, but those arguments do not address the victimization of innocent people or the victimized state's ability to pay for its prisoners.

Specifically, the proposal would require the Justice Department to transfer federal crime-fighting dollars from one state to another to pay for the costs of reincarceration as a repeat offender.

Half of the amounts transferred would be deposited in the state's crime victims' fund, and half would be deposited in the state account that collects federal law enforcement funds. Additionally, the proposal would provide $100,000 to the victims of the subsequent attack.

Interestingly, the bill mandates nothing. The states are required to do nothing. But a state would run the risk of losing federal crime-fighting funds if it let a killer or child molester out of jail and then that convict committed a crime again.

The proposition raises other issues. If a state decides to make life prisoners of these criminals, it has to have a place to house them. The state must also have a parole or probation system to judge accurately when to release prisoners.

Lawmakers considering the bill must also figure out how to handle those prisoners who have served their time. States have no authority to detain someone who has served his sentence and should not be penalized for future crimes in other states.

There are no simple answers to this vexing problem, but Salmon's approach would at least force a state to face the consequences of its decision. The Goldmans and Klaases of the world will not remain silent, and they have thrown their considerable celebrity behind this effort.

The proposal bears watching—and talking about—as the measure makes its way through Congress.

[From the Delaware County Sunday Times, March 26, 2000]

TIME FOR THE HOUSE TO ENACT AIMEE'S LAW

The brutal and senseless murder of Aimee Willard in June 1996 touched the very heart of Delaware County. A vivacious college student and athlete with a bright future was lost and we hurt for her family and friends.

But with the conviction and sentencing of her killer, the book did not close on this terrible chapter in county history. Aimee Willard lives on with the crafting of legislation aimed at preventing a tragedy such as the one that befell her.

This week the U.S. House of Representatives will consider ''Aimee's Law.''

Labeled as a bipartisan effort, the law turns up the heat on states to impose stronger sentences for criminals convicted of rape, murder and child molestation.

Gail Willard, Aimee's mother, testified at a Congressional hearing last year, urging stiffer state sentencing guidelines for career criminals such as Arthur Bomar.

Bomar had been convicted of killing a man in Nevada over a parking spot. He served 11 years in jail in Nevada before being paroled, despite showing a propensity for violence in prison.

''Right now, life criminals are running the system,'' said Gail Willard during her testimony in Washington.

U.S. Rep. Curt Weldon says the early release of violent felons is plain wrong.

''The average time served in a state prison for rape is just 5½ years,'' Weldon said. ''For child molestation, it is about four years. And for murder, it is just eight years. That's absolutely unacceptable.''

Aimee's Law requires a state that releases a convicted murderer, rapist or child molester who goes on to commit another crime in another state to compensate the second state for the cost of apprehending, prosecuting and incarcerating the criminal.

The money loss would come in the form of withholding federal crime grants from the first state and adding the amount to the second state's share, according to one of the law's sponsors, U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon, R–Ariz.

Whether the financial stick and carrot will work remains to be seen, but several questions remain:

Will the threat of grant money loss make parole boards more accountable—or at least look with a little more scrutiny at who is being allowed to walk out the front gate?

Why must the taxpayers foot the bill for screw-ups in the state prison system?

Should we keep building prisons and ignoring the issue of rehabilitation?

Despite those concerns, we see the consideration of ''Aimee's Law'' as a step in the right direction as it puts a victim's face on the problem of repeat violent offenders and the need to place responsibility on the shoulders of our state prisons.

AMERICAN SHIPBUILDERS CRUISE INTO A NEW MILLENNIUM

HON. NEIL ABERCROMBIE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 17, 2000

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker. On June 30, 2000, Litton Ingalls Shipbuilding cut steel on the first cruise ship to be built in the United States in nearly 45 years. This historic event marks another milestone in the U.S.-flag Cruise Ship Pilot Project, enacted as part of the MARITECH program in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 1998, and represents America's re-entry into the burgeoning cruise travel market.

People have been saying for years that America cannot build ships competitively on the world market. The construction of the two cruise ships for American Classic Voyages Co. at Litton Ingalls Shipbuilding demonstrates that America can build ships competitively on the world market. At a fixed price of $440 million a piece, the ships are only slightly above the price being charged for cruise ship construction in European yards, where nearly all new cruise ships are built. The price of the America ships would be even more competitive in the world market if the worldwide ship construction subsidies were eliminated.

The cruise industry is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel and leisure industry, growing at a pace of about nine percent annually. Loopholes in U.S. laws and regulations have essentially ceded this burgeoning vacation business to companies operating cruise ships under flags-of-convenience. With the exception of the single U.S.-flag oceangoing cruise ship operating in my State of Hawaii, there are no U.S.-flag oceangoing passenger liners. The U.S.-flag Cruise Ship Pilot Project, enacted to help jumpstart the U.S.-flag cruise industry, will change that and will give Americans a foothold in a cruise industry now dominated by foreign cruise lines.

The revitalization of the American cruise business is vital to our economic and national security. The Department of Defense has stated that the Pilot Project alone could save it ''tens to hundreds of millions of dollars'' in shipyard overhead costs. It also helps to sustain the shipbuilding industrial base of the U.S., which is vital to national security. The thousands of jobs created will help maintain the manpower necessary for building and crewing ships in times of national emergencies. The Department of Defense has also expressed an interest in utilizing the hull designs for cruise ships for command and control vessels in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see a resurgence of interest in the U.S.-flag cruise business. At least three companies have publicly expressed a desire to build U.S.-flag cruise ships in a U.S. shipyard for the American cruise market. Future construction in this area will improve the worldwide competitiveness of U.S. shipyards, and Litton Ingalls Shipbuilding is leading the way for America's re-entry into this growing marketplace. These efforts are important to the future of the U.S. shipbuilding industry, a U.S.-flag maritime industry, and our national security.

I am looking forward to the day when American Classic begins operating these new ships in Hawaii, bringing with it thousands of seagoing and shoreside jobs. Projects such as this will help renew America's leadership in commercial ship construction and in the cruise industry. I hope that Congress will do all it can to help revitalize this vital American industry.