Medicare and the home health industry. These changes decimated the system and have left behind them a long list of closed home health agencies and disabled patients without care. In response, many of us in Congress desperately sought a solution. Unfortunately, we were unable to come up with one true vehicle that could pass into law.

This year we come back again. Our efforts will be just as aggressive but a little wiser. Instead of competing against one another, we in Congress will now work together to fix the problem. That is why I have joined with Congressmen MCGOVERN, COBURN, and WEGYAND to craft legislation that will help our seniors in need.

Joined by Congressmen RAHALL, MCINTOSH, HOOLEY, WAMP, Barton, and ACKERMAN, we plan to push forward legislation that aims to help the neediest of home health beneficiaries and agencies.

The first patients that will receive the aid are those that are considered "outliers." Outliers are patients who have unusually high cost maladies. Under the BBA system, many agencies are unable to give them care at the risk of being run out of business because they are so cost prohibitive. We create a system that sets aside 10 specific ailments that would make a person eligible to receive this outlier status. Once they are identified as an outlier, agencies who take these individuals could draw from a newly established $250,000,000 Medicare fund to cover the added expenses. This will mean more of our poorest, oldest, and sickest receiving the medical coverage they so desperately need.

Another benefit of this legislation will be the establishment of a repayment plan for agencies who have been treating these individuals. Many of them are now almost out of business due to their charity and the inaccuracies of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) in assessing their plight. We offer an interest-free 36-month grace period to these agencies in order to repay these overpayments and settle any miscalculations on behalf of HCFA.

I urge all Members who see the need for a reform in home health to back this legislation.

The Home Health Access Preservation Act of 1999 is a common sense way to help our seniors in their time of need.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CRIMINAL WELFARE PREVENTION ACT, PART II AND THE CRIMINAL WELFARE PREVENTION ACT, PART III

HON. WALLY HERGER
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, May 25, 1999

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, today, I join with a bipartisan coalition of original cosponsors to reintroduce two important pieces of legislation—The Criminal Welfare Prevention Act, Part II and The Criminal Welfare Prevention Act, Part III—which will help prevent the needlessly wasted dollars.

Because of the original Criminal Welfare Prevention Act—legislation I introduced during the 104th Congress which was enacted as part of welfare reform in 1996—an effective new incentive system is now in place that enables the Social Security Administration (SSA) to detect and cut off fraudulent Supplemental Security Income (OASI) benefits that would otherwise be issued to prisoners. This provision established monetary incentives for state and local law enforcement authorities to enter into voluntary data-sharing contracts with SSA. Now, participating local authorities can elect to provide the Social Security numbers of their inmates to the Social Security Administration. If SSA identifies any "matches"—instances where inmates are fraudulently collecting SSA benefits—SSA now cuts off payment of as much as $400. Participation in these data-sharing contracts is strictly voluntary; they do not involve any unfunded federal mandates. According to an estimate by SSA's Inspector General, this initiative could help save taxpayers as much as $3.46 billion through the year 2001.

While we are proud of this achievement, Mr. Speaker, our work in this area is far from finished. During the 105th Congress, the House passed by follow-up legislation, The Criminal Welfare Prevention Act, Part II (H.R. 530), as part of The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Act (H.R. 3433). This proposal would encourage even more sheriffs to become involved in fraud-prevention by extending the $400 incentive payments to intercepted Social Security (OASI) checks as well. Regrettably, this proposal was not taken up by the Senate. For this reason, I am reintroducing The Criminal Welfare Prevention Act, Part II today, and will continue to push for the enactment of this important initiative.

At the same time, I will also be working to enact a somewhat broader proposal. The Criminal Welfare Prevention Act, Part III, which I first introduced during the 105th Congress as H.R. 4172. This legislation would simply require SSA to share its prisoner database with other federal departments and agencies—such as the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Labor, and Veterans' Affairs—so that the continuance of other fraudulent benefits to prisoners. While we do not have reliable information about how many prisoners are receiving food stamps, education aid, and VA benefits for which they are ineligible, it is likely that many do. SSA's prisoner database provides us with the perfect tool to help identify and terminate inappropriate benefits issued through other federal and federally-assisted spending programs. While SSA already has the authority to share its prisoner database with other agencies under the provisions of the Criminal Welfare Prevention Act—and while President Clinton has issued an executive memorandum ordering the SSA to do so—I believe it is important for Congress to codify this requirement into law. Because fraud prevention has not historically been a top priority at SSA, Congress should act swiftly to ensure that we permanently stamp out inmate fraud in all its forms. After all, taxpayers already pay for inmates' food, clothing, and shelter. It is simply outrageous that prisoners may be receiving fraudulent "bonus" checks each month as well.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all of my colleagues—on both sides of the aisle—to co-sponsor both of these important pieces of legislation. I hope that Congress will not promptly reject these proposals to help remind inmates that crime isn't supposed to pay.

THE MAILBOX PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

HON. RON PAUL
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, May 25, 1999

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce H.J. Res. 55, the Mailbox Privacy Protection Act, a joint resolution disapproving a Postal Service Regulation which tramples on the privacy of the two million Americans who rent mailboxes from Commercial Mail Receiving Agencies. Under this regulation, any American currently renting, or planning to rent, a commercial mailbox will have to provide the receiving agency with personal information, including two items of valid identification, one of which must contain a photograph of the applicant and one of which must contain a "serial number—traceable to the box." Of course, in most cases that number will be today's de facto national ID number—the Social Security number.

The receiving agency must then send the information to the Post Office, which will maintain the information in a database. Furthermore, the Post Office authorizes the Commercial Mail Receiving Agencies to collect and maintain photocopies of the forms of identification presented by the box renter. My colleagues might be interested to know that the Post Office is prohibited from doing this by the Privacy Act of 1974. I hope my colleagues are as outraged as I am by the Post Office's mandating that their competitors do what Congress has forbidden the Post Office to do directly.

Thanks to the Post Office's Federal Government-granted monopoly on first-class delivery service, Americans cannot receive mail without dealing with the Postal Service. Therefore, this regulation presents Americans who wish to receive mail at a Commercial Mail Receiving Agency with a choice: either provide the federal government with your name, address, photograph and social security number, or surrender the right to receive communications from one's fellow citizens in one's preferred manner.

This regulation, ironically, was issued at the same time the Post Office was issuing a stamp honoring Ayn Rand, one of the twentieth century's greatest champions of liberty. Another irony connected to this regulation is that it comes at a time when the Post Office is getting into an ever increasing number of enterprises not directly related to mail delivery. So, while the Postal Service uses its monopoly on first-class mail to compete with the private sector, it works to make life more difficult for its competitors in the field of mail delivery.

This regulation also provides the Post Office with a list of all those consumers who have opted out of the Post Office's mailbox service. Mr. Speaker, what business in America would opt out of the Post Office's mailbox service. Americans cannot receive mail without dealing with the Postal Service.