AMENDMENT TO RULES COMM. PRINT 115–23
OFFERED BY MR. DOGGETT OF TEXAS

At the end of subtitle C of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 12. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION WITH IRAN.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Iranian and Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria are fighting parallel to the United States and United States-backed forces in the campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which has targeted and killed both American and Iranian citizens in terrorist attacks.

(2) On January 12th, 2016, American sailors entered Iranian waters and were taken into Iranian custody while their ships were seized, but were released from custody within just 24 hours as a result of direct conversations between then-Secretary of State John Kerry and the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif.

(3) Six months later, on July 12, 2016, a bipartisan group of more than 75 former military officers, former diplomats, and other security experts of the
United States sent a letter to the President advising that the United States Government establish “[a]n emergency communications capability with Iran’s government to avoid misunderstandings or the escalation of incidents or accidents” and “[a] direct diplomatic channel at the deputy level to continue the communications currently being conducted between the Secretary of State and Iranian Foreign Minister”, arguing that “[w]ithout such continuity during the transition period, the next Administration will lack the diplomatic means to enlist or pressure Iran in the management of important and urgent issues such as ISIS, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan where the U.S. and Iran have some common but often clashing interests”.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) it would benefit United States security interests and the safety of United States citizens overseas to establish a high-level channel of communication with Iran to avoid misunderstandings or the escalation of incidents or accidents, and to ensure quick contact with Iran in the management of important and urgent issues such as the fight against ISIS; and
(2) the establishment of a channel of communications with Iran does not impart and is not meant to impart approval or acceptance of any aspect of Iranian government conduct, policy or rhetoric.

(c) ESTABLISHMENT.—The President shall seek to establish an official, direct channel of communication at the deputy cabinet level between the United States and Iran, to allow for quick, high-level communication on matters that arise that involve essential United States interests or the safety and security of United States citizens overseas.