AMENDMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE PRINT 118–10

OFFERED BY MR. PANETTA OF CALIFORNIA

At the end of subtitle I of title V, insert the following:

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION FOR AWARD OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR TO THOMAS H. GRIFFIN FOR ACTS OF VALOR AS A MEMBER OF THE ARMY DURING THE VIETNAM WAR.

(a) ACTS OF VALOR DESCRIBED.—Congress recognizes the following acts of valor by Thomas Helmut Griffin:

(1) Thomas Helmut Griffin distinguished himself by valorous actions against overwhelming odds while serving as a captain in the Army, Senior Advisor, 4/5 Infantry Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

(2) From March 1, 1969 through March 3, 1969, during the Vietnam War, such battalion was ordered to forestall an imminent attack on Quang Ngai City threatened by units of the North Vietnamese Army (hereinafter, “NVA”). The 4/5 Battalion engaged unabatedly with an entrenched NVA
regiment over the course of three days. Captain
Griffin (hereinafter, “CPT Griffin”) risked his life
and disregarded his personal safety, all above and
beyond his duty, on some 20 occasions, to lead his
battalion in the fight as well as direct gunships, air,
and artillery strikes on the enemy positions.

(3) During the initial phase of battle, CPT
Griffin made numerous trips across 50 meters of
open ground, while under heavy automatic weapon,
rocket, and small arms fire, to advise on the conduct
of the battle and better direct strikes against enemy
forces. Fearing slaughter of his soldiers, CPT Grif-
fin, with one of his counterparts from the Army of
the Republic of Vietnam (hereinafter, “ARVN”),
charged directly into heavy enemy fire and assaulted
a machine gun bunker. CPT Griffin continued these
runs, despite the enemy shooting the heels off CPT
Griffin’s boots.

(4) After taking out the NVA bunker, CPT
Griffin brandished the captured machine gun and
rocket launcher to exhort his battalion out of the kill
zone and continue the assault into the enemy en-
trenchments while remaining exposed to heavy fire.
CPT Griffin’s raw and intense close combat leader-
ship galvanized his battalion to move out of the kill zone and continue their mission.

(5) CPT Griffin’s ARVN counterpart was struck by close fire, and CPT Griffin unhesitatingly carried the wounded commander to safety while shielding him with his own body against rocket and artillery fire. CPT Griffin proceeded to carry four more wounded soldiers to safety while protecting them with his own body, returning each time against devastating enemy fire. While leading the final attack, CPT Griffin was hit three times in the chest by enemy small arms fire, yet continued to lead at the forefront of his battalion until the mission was completed. Under CPT Griffin’s command and leadership, the 4/5 Battalion continued to reduce the enemy regiment’s fighting capacity.

(6) CPT Griffin’s personal leadership in intense close combat resulted in a major win for his battalion against overwhelming odds, killing 93 enemy soldiers and saving the lives of over 300 allied soldiers by galvanizing and leading them out of the kill zone.

(7) CPT Griffin’s selfless devotion to duty, his extraordinary heroism, conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity, and numerous risks of his life above and
beyond the call of duty, are all in keeping with the
highest traditions of the Army, and reflect great
credit on himself, the Armed Forces, and the United
States.

(b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following with re-
gards to the original decision to award a Silver Star to
Thomas Helmut Griffin:

(1) When awarding him the Silver Star, CPT
Griffin’s chain of command was unaware of the full
extent of his valorous actions and the numerous
risks he took for his soldiers, all above and beyond
the call of duty.

(2) Congress notes that although CPT Griffin
was struck three times by enemy fire, and at one
point was completely surrounded by the enemy, he
continued to fight and lead his battalion against dev-
astating and overwhelming enemy fire.

(3) Congress notes that CPT Griffin’s Com-
manding Officer, Colonel Dean E. Hutter (ret.), sent
a letter to the Department of the Army dated No-

dember 6, 2013, in which he accounts for the revela-
tion of additional, substantive and material evidence
not known at the time of the decision to award the
Silver Star, and in which he describes as compelling
“the justice of upgrading CPT Griffin’s sustained
and varied acts of combat valor to their rightful level of recognition, the Medal of Honor”.

(4) Congress further notes that Colonel Hutter issued a letter to former United States Representative Sam Farr on September 15, 2011, noting his support for an upgrade from a Silver Star to a Medal of Honor, having recognized CPT Griffin’s acts of valor as, “numerous, selfless demonstrations of personal risk in pressing a close-combat attack against a well-entrenched element of a battalion-size enemy formation”.

(c) Authorization of Award of Medal of Honor to Thomas Helmut Griffin for Acts of Valor as a Member of the Army During the Vietnam War.—

(1) Authorization.—Notwithstanding the time limitations specified in section 7274 of title 10, United States Code, or any other time limitation with respect to the awarding of certain medals to persons who served in the Armed Forces, the President is authorized to award the Medal of Honor, under section 7271 of such title, to Thomas Helmut Griffin for the acts of valor described in subsection (b).
(2) ACTS OF VALOR DESCRIBED.—The acts of valor described in this subsection are the actions of Thomas H. Griffin during the period of March 1 through March 3, 1969, while serving as a captain in the Army during the Vietnam War, for which he was previously awarded the Silver Star.