

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2399

To authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to Thomas H. Griffin for acts of valor as a member of the Army during the Vietnam War.

---

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 29, 2023

Mr. PANETTA introduced the following bill; which was referred to the  
Committee on Armed Services

---

## A BILL

To authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to Thomas H. Griffin for acts of valor as a member of the Army during the Vietnam War.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. ACTS OF VALOR DESCRIBED.**

4 Congress recognizes the following acts of valor by  
5 Thomas Helmut Griffin:

6 (1) Thomas Helmut Griffin distinguished him-  
7 self by valorous actions against overwhelming odds  
8 while serving as a captain in the Army, Senior Advi-

1 sor, 4/5 Infantry Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division,  
2 Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

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

15 (3) During the initial phase of battle, CPT  
16 Griffin made numerous trips across 50 meters of  
17 open ground, while under heavy automatic weapon,  
18 rocket, and small arms fire, to advise on the conduct  
19 of the battle and better direct strikes against enemy  
20 forces. Fearing slaughter of his soldiers, CPT Grif-  
21 fin, with one of his counterparts from the Army of  
22 the Republic of Vietnam (hereinafter, “ARVN”),  
23 charged directly into heavy enemy fire and assaulted  
24 a machine gun bunker. CPT Griffin continued these

1 runs, despite the enemy shooting the heels off CPT  
2 Griffin's boots.

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

11 (5) CPT Griffin's ARVN counterpart was  
12 struck by close fire, and CPT Griffin unhesitatingly  
13 carried the wounded commander to safety while  
14 shielding him with his own body against rocket and  
15 artillery fire. CPT Griffin proceeded to carry four  
16 more wounded soldiers to safety while protecting  
17 them with his own body, returning each time against  
18 devastating enemy fire. While leading the final at-  
19 tack, CPT Griffin was hit three times in the chest  
20 by enemy small arms fire, yet continued to lead at  
21 the forefront of his battalion until the mission was  
22 completed. Under CPT Griffin's command and lead-  
23 ership, the 4/5 Battalion continued to reduce the  
24 enemy regiment's fighting capacity.

1           (6) CPT Griffin’s personal leadership in intense  
2 close combat resulted in a major win for his bat-  
3 talion against overwhelming odds, killing 93 enemy  
4 soldiers and saving the lives of over 300 allied sol-  
5 diers by galvanizing and leading them out of the kill  
6 zone.

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

14 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

15       Congress finds the following with regards to the origi-  
16 nal decision to award a Silver Star to Thomas Helmut  
17 Griffin:

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

23           (2) Congress notes that although CPT Griffin  
24 was struck three times by enemy fire, and at one  
25 point was completely surrounded by the enemy, he

1 continued to fight and lead his battalion against dev-  
2 astating and overwhelming enemy fire.

3 (3) Congress notes that CPT Griffin’s Com-  
4 manding Officer, Colonel Dean E. Hutter (ret.), sent  
5 a letter to the Department of the Army dated No-  
6 vember 6, 2013, in which he accounts for the revela-  
7 tion of additional, substantive and material evidence  
8 not known at the time of the decision to award the  
9 Silver Star, and in which he describes as compelling  
10 “the justice of upgrading CPT Griffin’s sustained  
11 and varied acts of combat valor to their rightful level  
12 of recognition, the Medal of Honor”.

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

1 **SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF AWARD OF MEDAL OF HONOR**  
2 **TO THOMAS HELMUT GRIFFIN FOR ACTS OF**  
3 **VALOR AS A MEMBER OF THE ARMY DURING**  
4 **THE VIETNAM WAR.**

5 (a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—Notwithstanding the time lim-  
6 itations specified in section 7274 of title 10, United States  
7 Code, or any other time limitation with respect to the  
8 awarding of certain medals to persons who served in the  
9 Armed Forces, the President is authorized to award the  
10 Medal of Honor, under section 7271 of such title, to  
11 Thomas Helmut Griffin for the acts of valor described in  
12 subsection (b).

13 (b) **ACTS OF VALOR DESCRIBED.**—The acts of valor  
14 described in this subsection are the actions of Thomas H.  
15 Griffin during the period of March 1 through March 3,  
16 1969, while serving as a captain in the Army during the  
17 Vietnam War, for which he was previously awarded the  
18 Silver Star.

○