



Alejandro Mayorkas: A Strong Choice to Lead the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden announced he selected Alejandro Mayorkas as his nominee to become secretary of the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) on November 23, 2020. Created in the aftermath of 9/11, DHS is responsible for addressing a range of national security issues including threats of terrorism, cybersecurity risks and the administration and enforcement of immigration laws.

Mayorkas is well-qualified and has previously been confirmed by the U.S. Senate for other DHS positions.

- Mayorkas was confirmed by the Senate and served as the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California during the Clinton administration and has over 30 years of legal experience, including with preeminent law firms.
- Mayorkas was [unanimously](#) confirmed by the Senate and served as the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) from 2009 to 2013.
- Mayorkas was [confirmed](#) by the Senate and served as the Deputy Secretary of DHS from 2013 to 2016.

Mayorkas is a champion for smart border security, fraud prevention, and sensible law enforcement.

- As a former prosecutor, Mr. Mayorkas is keenly aware of the importance of protecting the integrity of our immigration system and the rule of law, demonstrating a commitment to DHS's contributions to public safety and security and protecting against immigration fraud.
- Mayorkas [developed and implemented](#) policies to enhance national security priorities related to cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and aviation and border security.
- Mayorkas helped [enhance](#) the anti-fraud capabilities of the E-Verify program, supporting the integrity of employment verification checks of work authorization.
- Mayorkas [worked to address](#) root causes of migration from Central American migration, while supporting efforts to hire more immigration court judges, increase law enforcement against smugglers and ensure the safe treatment of migrant children.
- During Mayorkas's time leading USCIS, the agency redesigned and enhanced the security features on its most common immigration documents to make them more [counterfeit-resistant](#). These include Permanent Resident Cards (green cards), Employment Authorization Documents, Certificates of Citizenship, and Naturalization Certificates.
- In 2010, he elevated the profile of USCIS's [Fraud Detection and National Security unit](#) (FDNS), making it a Directorate, and enhanced the integration of the FDNS mission in all facets of the agency's work.

Mayorkas is committed to agency modernization and increasing efficiency.

- Mayorkas [realigned](#) USCIS's organizational structure and improved the utilization of refurbished information technology, driving \$160 million in budget cut cost-savings while [meeting or exceeding](#) goals for processing times with no reduction in the quality of service.
- Mayorkas [led](#) a transformation project to transition USCIS from a paper-based system to an electronic case management system.

Mayorkas supports a fair and humane immigration system.

- Mayorkas helped [create](#) and implement [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) (DACA), which provides qualifying undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children with work authorization and temporary protection from deportation.
- Mayorkas [supports](#) legislation that would provide a permanent solution for Dreamers, including a pathway to citizenship.
- Mayorkas established the [Central American Minors Program](#), which allowed minors in Central America with parents lawfully residing in the U.S. to qualify as refugees in their home countries and be temporarily paroled into the U.S. on humanitarian grounds. It was intended to [protect](#) minors from taking a “perilous journey” to reach the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Mayorkas led USCIS's response to the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, which allowed Haitian nationals in the U.S. to obtain [Temporary Protected Status](#) (TPS). Within a year, more than 49,000 Haitians residing in the U.S. obtained TPS protections.
- Mayorkas [launched](#) the Unauthorized Practice of Immigration Law Initiative to protect immigrant communities from fraudulent legal aid and prosecute wrongdoers.

Mayorkas understands the immigrant experience.

- Mayorkas's family [immigrated](#) to the U.S. in 1960 as political refugees when he was one year old after Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba. Previously, Mayorkas's Romanian Jewish mother fled Romania for Cuba during the Holocaust.
- In his first public statement since that announcement, Mayorkas [explicitly](#) committed to oversee the protection of “those who flee persecution in search of a better life.”
- Once confirmed, Mayorkas would be the first immigrant and first Latino to serve as DHS Secretary.