



March 1, 2023

Message from Secretary Mayorkas on the 20th Anniversary of the Department of Homeland Security

Colleagues,

The tragedy of September 11, 2001 forced us to realize that our country was not prepared to address the threat of foreign terrorism, and we resolved then to never again take our security for granted. Many of you sought a way to serve, to make a meaningful contribution to the safety and security of our homeland.

Our Department was born of that urgent moment. Less than two years after 9/11, 22 agencies and 180,000 public servants from across the federal government came together to form the Department of Homeland Security, charged with the vital mission to protect the American people and our way of life.

Today is our Department's 20th Anniversary. Today we are more than 260,000 people strong. Our workforce includes 32,000 public servants who, since day one, have helped our Department advance to meet the dynamic and evolving threats and challenges we now face. They – our plank holders – are a shining example of the dedication and talent of all of you.

We are in awe of the more than 54,000 veterans among us, individuals who continue their service to country through their work in our Department. Members of our armed forces who now work on the front lines in a different uniform, or who work in offices across the country and the world and selflessly keep giving of themselves for the safety and security of others.

All of you who serve in our Department are heroes. So too are your families and your loved ones. Nobody serves alone; when one serves, the family serves. Our families and loved ones deserve our deepest appreciation and respect.

I hope you will join us today, on this 20th anniversary of our Department, as we mark this very special occasion. At 12:00 p.m. EST today, we will host a special anniversary event on our St. Elizabeths headquarters campus. You can watch at [DHS.gov/live](https://dhs.gov/live). The event will feature performances and special guests reflecting 20 years of protecting America. Whether you are serving across the country or around the world, please join us virtually as we recognize your contributions to the security of our country. Our Agencies and Offices will be hosting their own gatherings to view the event live. Please check your local notices to find details about how you can view and enjoy this special event with colleagues.

Your legacy of service is the foundation of all we have accomplished and all we will accomplish moving forward. I am proud to support you and serve alongside you.

In recognition of your extraordinary sacrifices and contributions in the service of our country, I am privileged to grant you 8 hours of administrative leave. You can use the administrative leave this calendar year or next; your Agency or Office will send you further guidance.

Thank you for everything you do.

Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security

With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values.