



U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

DHS, VA Announce Initiative to Support Noncitizen Service Members, Veterans, and Immediate Family Members

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WASHINGTON – Today, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis R. McDonough announced a new initiative to support our Nation’s noncitizen service members, veterans, and the immediate family members of service members.

“The Department of Homeland Security recognizes the profound commitment and sacrifice that service members and their families have made to the United States of America,” **said Secretary Mayorkas**. “Together with our partner the Department of Veterans Affairs, we are committed to bringing back military service members, veterans, and their immediate family members who were unjustly removed and ensuring they receive the benefits to which they may be entitled. Today we are taking important steps to make that a reality.”

“It’s our responsibility to serve all veterans as well as they have served us – no matter who they are, where they are from, or the status of their citizenship,” **said Secretary McDonough**. “Keeping that promise means ensuring that noncitizen service members, veterans, and their families are guaranteed a place in the country they swore an oath – and in many cases fought – to defend. We at VA are proud to work alongside DHS as to make that happen.”

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other partners to identify deported veterans to ensure they are able to obtain VA benefits to which they may be entitled. VA is also working to ensure all veterans, including deported veterans and their families, are vaccinated.

As part of the DHS initiative, Secretary Mayorkas directed U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to immediately conduct a review of policies and practices to ensure that all eligible current and former noncitizen service members and the immediate families of military members are able to remain in or return to the United States, remove barriers to naturalization for those eligible, and improve access to immigration services.

USCIS, ICE, and CBP will develop a rigorous, systematic approach to review the cases of individuals whose removals failed to live up to our highest values. USCIS, ICE, and CBP have also committed to protecting and expanding naturalization opportunities for current and former noncitizen service members and the immediate family of military members.

DHS will also establish a robust interagency coordination effort; create a resource center to assist service members and their immediate family with issues related to immigration; remove barriers to naturalization for eligible individuals; and review removal policies and practices to avoid future unjust removals of current and former service members and immediate family of service members.

DHS and VA will conduct the reviews in close partnership with the Department of Defense. In the coming weeks, DHS and VA will also engage with the advocacy community serving noncitizen military service members, veterans, and immediate family members of service members to communicate its commitments, receive feedback on proposed initiatives, and announce further actions in support of this statement and in connection with the forthcoming review.

Topics: [Secretary of Homeland Security](#) (/topics/secretary-homeland-security).

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