

# [***As impeachment looms, Homeland Security secretary says his agency will not be distracted by politics***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B7P-XC41-JC5B-G3SJ-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

WASHINGTON — Homeland Security Secretary [*Alejandro Mayorkas*](https://apnews.com/hub/alejandro-mayorkas) says he doesn't take it personally that House Republicans are trying to [*make him the first Cabinet official impeached*](https://apnews.com/article/mayorkas-homeland-security-impeachment-congress-f369f4b6270e59cb7b7003bc9d7ce448) in nearly 150 years, saying the attacks against him are ***politics***: “They don’t know me."

“Many of these individuals haven’t sat down and spoken with me about my approach to the work, my policy positions, what we’re trying to do, how we are scrupulously and quite aggressively enforcing the law,” he said.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press Friday, the secretary spoke of impeachment, soon-to-be-released border legislation, and his concerns going into the 2024 election.

He said he is “totally focused on the work” that his agency conducts and is not distracted by the ***politics*** of impeachment.

“I do not lose a minute’s sleep over the impeachment. I lose minutes of sleep, over the challenges that we have substantively, the challenges that we confront. And are we doing everything that we can to meet them? And am I supporting the workforce and its needs?” the secretary said.

Republicans on the House Homeland Security Committee voted Wednesday to send [*two articles of impeachment against*](https://apnews.com/article/congress-mayorkas-immigration-border-republicans-impeachment-3cc41becd7ef3d8b91ccd29433321d63) Mayorkas to the full House for consideration. A vote by the House could come as early as next week although it's unclear whether Republicans will have enough support to impeach the secretary.

If they do, it would be the first time a Cabinet secretary has been impeached since 1876. In that instance, it was over kickbacks on government contracts. Going after an official for a policy dispute, in this instance over the claim that Mayorkas is not upholding immigration laws, is unprecedented.

The impeachment articles charge that Mayorkas “refused to comply with Federal immigration laws” amid a record surge of migrants at the southern border and that he has “breached the public trust” in his claims to Congress that the U.S.-Mexico border is secure. The secretary and supporters have repeatedly said that what's happening is part of a worldwide phenomenon of people on the move seeking a better way of life and that the U.S. immigration system needs more resources and legislation to meet the challenge.

The secretary called the Republican charges against him "politically motivated and completely baseless," pointing to constitutional scholars who have weighed in with similar assessments. He said if it comes to a trial in the Senate, which generally follows an impeachment vote, he's prepared to defend himself. But — saying he'll probably get less sleep than the little he does already — he emphasized that he'll continue to focus on the department's work.

Other issues from the interview:

**BORDER NEGOTIATIONS IN CONGRESS**

Even as Republicans in the House are trying to get rid of Mayorkas, he's been meeting with Republicans on the other side of Congress. For weeks, he's been a regular presence on the Senate side, meeting with a bipartisan group of senators to negotiate a deal to pair [*border enforcement measures and Ukraine aid*](https://apnews.com/article/congress-senate-border-security-bill-ukraine-348caee96e711403825881384b6bc46c). Text of the proposed legislation is expected to be released any day. However, in an election year where immigration is set to be a central and contentious issue, [*it's unclear whether the proposal*](https://apnews.com/article/congress-border-security-ukraine-trump-a8601ec6629ddc5b769028ca99ad9879) will become law.

Mayorkas would not discuss details of the proposed legislation and said it wouldn't necessarily address the root causes of migration. But if it becomes law, he said it would provide the department “with tools, to advance the security of the border."

“We need the system fixed. The legislation that will hopefully publish soon is a very significant piece of that,” said Mayorkas.

Immigration advocates have raised alarms about the legislation after leaks of some of the details, saying it would make it harder for persecuted migrants to find safety. The Secretary noted that just about everything related to immigration provokes disagreement and that he thinks the proposals adhere “to the country's values.”

**ELECTION SECURITY**

In talking about his concerns for 2024, the secretary raised the upcoming elections. Election security is part of the Department of Homeland Security's purview via the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. Specifically, Mayorkas noted concerns over cyber attacks on the election infrastructure, disinformation and threats to local election officials.

**STANDOFF WITH TEXAS**

Eagle Pass, Texas has recently become one of the busiest locations for people attempting to cross into the U.S. illegally from Mexico. Earlier this month, troops from the Texas National Guard seized the park and began turning away federal immigration authorities [*despite pleas from U.S. government officials*](https://apnews.com/article/immigration-texas-biden-razor-wire-park-50e0964fab96708954bd773b791f02da). Immigration enforcement is typically a federal responsibility.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has said he will continue implementing new immigration measures, calling it a “constitutional right to self-defense.” When asked about what precedent Abbott's actions might take Mayorkas said: “It is unconscionable for a public official, to deliberately refuse to communicate, coordinate, collaborate with other public officials in the service of our nation’s interests, and to refuse to do so with the hope of creating disorder for others. It is unconscionable.”

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