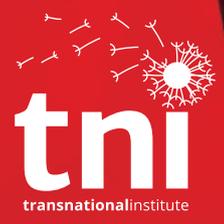


BORDER WARS BRIEFING — February 2021

# BIDEN'S BORDER

The industry, the Democrats and the 2020 elections



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## KEY FINDINGS

- Early into his presidency, Joe Biden has already indicated through 10 executive orders that he wants to end the brutality associated with Trump's border and immigration policies. However undoing all the harmful dimensions of the US border regime will require substantial structural change and an end to the close ties between the Democrats and the border industry.
- The border security and immigration detention industry has boomed in the last decades thanks to constant increases in government spending by both parties—Democrats and Republicans. Between 2008 and 2020, CBP and ICE issued 105,997 contracts worth \$55.1 billion to private corporations. The industry is now deeply embedded in US government bodies and decision-making, with close financial ties to strategic politicians.
- 13 companies play a pivotal role in the US border industry: CoreCivic, Deloitte, Elbit Systems, GEO Group, General Atomics, General Dynamics, G4S, IBM, Leidos, Lockheed Martin, L3Harris, Northrop Grumman, and Palantir. Some of the firms also provide other services and products to the US government, but border and detention contracts have been a consistently growing part of all of their portfolios.
- These top border contractors through individual donations and their Political Action Committees (PACs) gave more than \$40 million during the 2020 electoral cycle to the two parties (\$40,333,427). Democrats overall received more contributions from the big border contractors than the Republicans (55 percent versus 45 percent). This is a swing back to the Democrats, as over the last 10 years contributions from 11 of the 13 companies have favored Republicans. It suggests an intention by the border industry to hedge their political bets and ensure that border security policies are not rolled back to the detriment of future profits.
- The 13 border security companies' executives and top employees contributed three times more to Joe Biden (\$5,364,994) than to Donald Trump (\$1,730,435).
- A few border security companies show preferences towards one political party. Detention-related companies, in particular CoreCivic, G4S and GEO Group, strongly favor Republicans along with military contractors Elbit Systems and General Atomics, while auditing and IT companies Deloitte, IBM and Palantir overwhelmingly favor the Democrats.
- The 13 companies have contributed \$10 million (\$9,674,911) in the 2020 electoral cycle to members of strategic legislative committees that design and fund border security policies: the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and the House Homeland Security Committee. The biggest contributors are Deloitte, General Dynamics, L3Harris, Leidos, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, and nearly all donate substantially to both parties, with a preference for Republican candidates. Democrat Senator Jack Reed (\$426,413), Republican Congresswoman Kay Granger (\$442,406) and Republican Senator Richard Shelby (\$430,150) all received more than \$400,000 in 2020.
- Biden is opposed to the wall-building of Trump, but has along with many Democrats voiced public support for a more hidden 'virtual wall' and 'smart borders', deploying surveillance technologies that will be both more lucrative for the industry and more hidden in terms of the abuses they perpetrate.
- Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas developed and implemented DACA under Obama's administration, but also as a lawyer with the firm WilmerHale between 2018 and 2020 earned \$3.3 million representing companies including border contractors Northrop Grumman and Leidos.
- Over the last 40 years, Biden has a mixed voting record on border policy, showing some support for immigrant rights on several occasions but also approving legislation (the 1996 Illegal Immigration and Immigration Reform Act) that enabled the mass deportations under Obama, and the 2006 Secure Fence Act, which extended the wall long before Trump's election.
- The Democrat Party as a whole also has a mixed record. Under President Bill Clinton, the Democrats approved the 1994 Prevention through Deterrence national border strategy and implemented the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act that dramatically increased the pace of border militarization as well as deportations. Later Obama became the first president to deport nearly 3 million people during his eight-year term.
- Nearly 8,000 bodies have been recovered in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands between 1998 and 2019 as a result of policies by both parties. The organization No More Deaths has estimated that three to ten times as many people may have died or disappeared since today's border-enforcement strategy was implemented. The border industrial complex's profits are based on border and immigration policies that have deadly consequences.

## INTRODUCTION

After the inauguration on January 20, 2021, President Joe Biden acted quickly on immigration and border issues. First came executive orders to stop the construction of the border wall and to start a 100-day moratorium on deportation.<sup>1</sup> The newly elected president also introduced a bill including an eight-year legalization process for undocumented immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Right from the first day, Biden made his intention clear: to eliminate the immigration and border legacy of Donald Trump.

For the general public and many advocates anxious for more humane border and immigration policies, this was why the election of Joe Biden was a necessary first step. Combine this with the Democrats taking control of the U.S. Congress, and there is tremendous optimism that change is on the way.

Conservative factions in the United States, however, have seen things quite differently. Arkansas Republican Tom Cotton described Biden's initial actions as "open borders: Total amnesty, no regard for the health and security of Americans, and zero enforcement." On the one hand, Cotton is simply repeating long-held conservative views on border and immigration enforcement. On the other hand, however, the assertion that Biden was opening the border could not be further from the truth.

As reported by *The New York Times*, the Biden administration intends to "enhance security at the border through new technologies instead of through the border wall Mr. Trump tried to build."<sup>3</sup> The money set aside for the border wall will go instead to technologies and to the military, security, and IT companies that provide them. Given that the Biden campaign received more money than Donald Trump from companies in the border industry, as is examined in this research briefing, that shift should not be a surprise. As it stands now, a much more hidden "virtual wall" (which will also hide the abuses it perpetrates) will become the profitable border wall of the Biden era.

While much of the U.S. public may have woken up to the realities of keeping migrants in cages, camps, and deportation under the Trump administration, the unprecedented fortification of the U.S. border and immigration enforcement apparatus over the last 25 years has been a bipartisan effort. During this time, industry has increased its already large imprint on policy and practice through the thousands of contracts it has won and its deep engagement in policy-making processes. In this sense, former President Trump and his policies were but one element in many moving parts of a border industrial complex that includes key government agencies, legislators in strategic congressional and senatorial committees and a plethora of consultants, advisors and think tanks all heavily invested in an expanding border infrastructure.

This research briefing builds on the 2019 report *More Than a Wall: Corporate Profiteering and the Militarization of U.S. Borders*,<sup>4</sup> which examined the main border contractors, their contracts, profits, and insertion into policy making via campaign contributions and lobbying. It applies that research and analysis to the 2020 U.S. elections.

The briefing examines the record of both parties, especially those in key congressional committees, with an emphasis on examining the Democrats and their positions as they take office in 2021. Under the Trump administration, Democrats positioned the party as anti-wall, and in favor of the humane treatment of migrants. Yet prominent Democrats—from Biden on down—have a checkered history in terms of anti-migrant policies and continue to receive hefty contributions from the top industries of a border and immigration enforcement complex. This cluster of companies, with large budgets and an active interest in maintaining these from U.S. border and immigration control, may be the biggest impediment to establishing a humane response to border and immigration issues. History suggests that the Democrats will not make effective change themselves. They will need the push of social movements for a new approach. Right now is precisely the moment to do it.

## MORE THAN A WALL—SUMMARY

The report published by the Transnational Institute (TNI) in 2019, *More than a Wall*, argued that former President Donald Trump’s obsession with “building a wall” on the U.S.–Mexico border had both distorted and obscured public debate on border control. This is not only because there was already a physical wall when he entered office—more than 650 miles of it—but because Trump’s theatrics and the Democrats’ opposition to his plans gave the impression that the Trump administration was forging a new direction on border control.

*More than a Wall* examined the historical trend towards the militarization of the U.S.–Mexico border and hostility to recent Latin American migrants, which show that, rather than marking a new direction, the former President Trump was ratcheting up—and ultimately consolidating—a long-standing U.S. approach to border control.

The report demonstrated that one of the key reasons for the bipartisan consensus was the power and influence of the corporations that supply most of the infrastructure, equipment and technology for border control, and which profited handsomely from the extraordinary rise in budgets for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The report highlighted the role of 17 corporations, including the world’s largest arms firms, security and IT corporations, and private prison and detention firms that have been critical in shaping and profiting from the militarization of U.S. borders. It showed that these companies, through their campaign contributions, lobbying, constant engagement with government officials, and the revolving door between industry and government, had formed a powerful border-industrial complex that had become the major impediment to a humane response to migration.

### Summary of key findings in 2019 report

- CBP and ICE budgets have more than doubled in the last 13 years and increased by more than 6,000 percent since 1980 (when border control was run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service).
- The physical wall is one small aspect of contemporary U.S. border control, which also relies on an extensive technological infrastructure including aircraft, drones, radars, cameras, motion sensors, biometric systems and vast AI data processing technologies, that extend well beyond the physical barriers on the border—a constantly growing apparatus providing endless commercial opportunities for border corporations.
- Between 2006 and 2018, ICE, CBP and the Coast Guard together issued more than 344,000 contracts for border and immigration control services worth \$80.5 billion.
- The report identified 14 companies as giants in the border security business—Accenture, Boeing, Elbit Systems, Flir Systems, G4S, General Atomics, General Dynamics, IBM, L3 Technologies (now L3Harris),<sup>5</sup> Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, PAE, Raytheon, UNISYS. Three companies—CoreCivic, Geo Group and G4S—are major players in the detention and migrant transport business.<sup>6</sup> (Boeing is more of a historical rather than current player and Accenture recently had a significant contract cancelled so are not included in this subsequent briefing).

- The border-security corporate giants are the biggest corporate campaign contributors to members of the House Appropriations Committee and the Homeland Security Committee—strategic committees in border policies and contracts. Between 2006 and 2018, Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon contributed a total of \$27.6 million to members of the Appropriations Committee and \$6.5 million to members of the Homeland Security Committee.
- Lobbying on homeland security—of which border militarization is a significant part—has increased significantly in the last 17 years. In total, from 2002 to 2019 there were nearly 20,000 reported lobbying “visits” related to homeland security. In 2018, there were 677 clients with 2,841 visits listed: including top CBP and ICE contractors Accenture, Boeing, CoreCivic, Geo Group, L3 Harris, and Leidos.
- Border-security giants also build powerful and fruitful relationships through their constant interactions with government officials, in particular the annual Border Security Expos that since 2005 have brought together industry executives and top officials from the DHS, CBP, and ICE.
- There is also a revolving door between corporations and government. Ex-government officials in CBP and DHS are often head-hunted by various corporations, or enter the lobbying industry—not only as lobbyists but also as consultants and strategists. Between 2003 and 2017, at least four CBP commissioners and three DHS Secretaries went onto homeland security corporations or consulting companies after leaving government.

Full report and references at  
<https://www.tni.org/morethanawall>



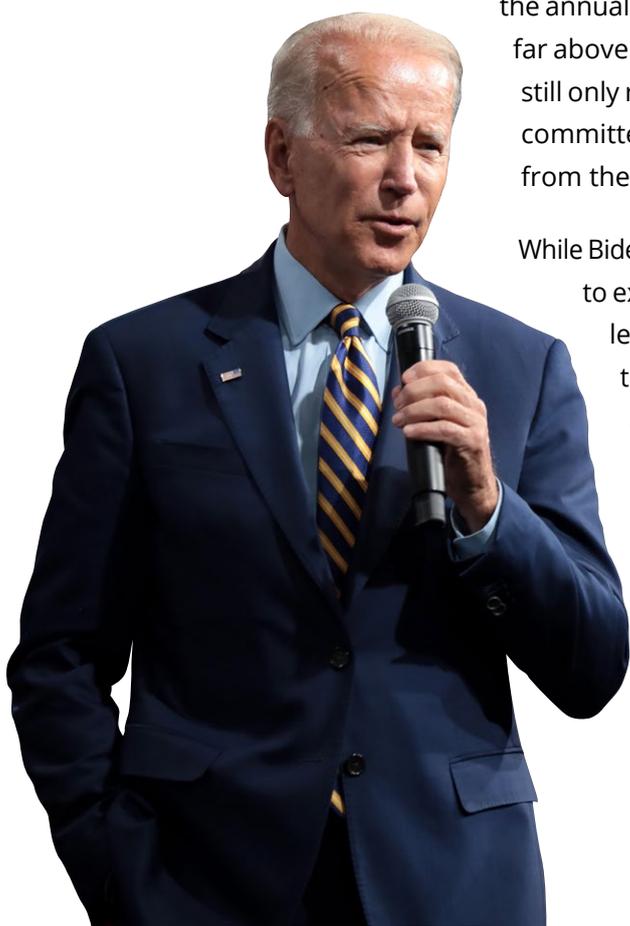
## PRESIDENT BIDEN'S POSITION ON IMMIGRATION

"It is a moral failing and a national shame when a father and his baby daughter drown seeking our shores. When children are locked away in overcrowded detention centers and the government seeks to keep them there indefinitely. When our government argues in court against giving those children toothbrushes and soap. When President Trump uses family separation as a weapon against desperate mothers, fathers, and children seeking safety and a better life. When he threatens massive raids that would break up families who have been in this country for years and targets people at sensitive locations like hospitals and schools. When children die while in custody due to lack of adequate care."

Biden began his 2020 campaign with this quote, and an impassioned call for immigration justice. And he has hit the ground running when he took office on January 20 with 10 executive orders in his first 3 weeks relating to immigration and border policies and a proposal for reform. The executive orders were intended to honor his campaign promise to correct "Trump's abuses." He strengthened the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative, rescinded the "Muslim ban," halted the construction of the border wall, and called for a deportation moratorium. It is important to note that behind all of these orders were years of significant public pressure, particularly from immigrant rights organizations that also played a key role in turning out the vote in critical states such as Arizona and Georgia.

Biden also introduced immigration legislation, described as "bold" by the *Washington Post*, that would establish an eight-year "path to citizenship."<sup>7</sup> In Biden's campaign he also promised that he would be "ending family separations,"<sup>8</sup> and reversing policies such as the Migrant Protection Protocols (Remain in Mexico Program). He promised that he would set the annual cap on refugees admitted to the United States at 125,000, far above the limit of 18,000 Trump had set for fiscal year 2020, but still only roughly half the number allowed in 1980 (231,700). He also committed to stop land confiscations for building the wall, a shift from the policy he supported under the Obama administration.<sup>9</sup>

While Biden's positions seem to plan out a bold new path, it is important to examine the nuances in his proposals and orders and what is left out. The "Muslim bans" executive order did not mention that many of the same countries had been already designated as "special interest" under Obama, and its travelers scrutinized and sometimes rejected through CBP's National Targeting Center.<sup>10</sup> The executive order that orders a review of DHS interior enforcement practices, and calls for a 100-day deportation moratorium, does not cover people charged with an "aggravated felony," a term invented for immigration law that does not necessarily refer to a felonious crime (shoplifting, for example, is



included), and significantly expanded the number of deportable offenses. Along these lines, Biden has not mentioned revamping the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which broadened deportable offenses under this aggravated felony term and created the deportation machine that Trump inherited. In contrast, the Bernie Sanders campaign explicitly pledged to revamp the 1996 law.

The executive order that halted building the border wall made good on Biden's campaign promise that not "another foot of wall [will be] constructed on my administration." But he has not committed to dismantling the existing wall, including the 650 miles and barriers that he had voted for in 2006. He also expressed his continuing support for investing in technological forms of border control, saying, "I'm going to make sure that we have border protection, but it's going to be based on making sure that we use high-tech capacity to deal with it." At a separate CNN Town Hall in February 2020, Biden had argued that "We have a right to protect the border".

His policy platform says his administration would invest in better technology including "cameras, sensors, large-scale X-ray machines, and fixed towers."<sup>11</sup> The "Biden Plan for Securing Our Values as a Nation of Immigrants" says he will "direct federal resources to smart border enforcement efforts," or technologies, "that will actually keep America safer." The prevention through deterrence strategy that dictates the deployment walls, agents, and technologies and is designed to force people to cross into the United States through desolate, dangerous areas remains unmentioned.

The right to "protect the border" also translates into an unwillingness to decriminalize unauthorized border crossings. Doing so would not only prevent the unwarranted criminalization of migrants who have no other choice but to enter the United States, but would also disrupt the pipeline to prison/detention business, and cut into the revenue of large companies such as CoreCivic, Deloitte, G4S, and Palantir. When asked about this position in an interview, Biden said "I think people should have to get in line, but if people are coming because they're actually seeking asylum, they should have a chance to make their case."<sup>12</sup> In other words, he equivocated on the issue of decriminalizing border crossings—unlike most of his Democratic rivals for the presidency, who supported decriminalization.

Biden also promises to work in partnership with Canada and Mexico, which will "translate to greater security for all our countries." In terms of Mexico, this means the continuation of the U.S. border externalization programs that accelerated during the Obama administration.

Biden has pledged, however, to end for-profit detention centers. "No business," he states, "should profit from the suffering of desperate people fleeing violence."<sup>13</sup> Despite the pledge, DHS contracts with private prison companies were not included in an executive order on January 26. Only the Department of Justice was ordered to not renew such contracts.<sup>14</sup>

Despite activist campaigns to abolish or reform ICE and CBP, Biden did not "even outline any major restructuring" of the agencies during his campaign, according to the *New York Times*.<sup>15</sup> Biden, however, does call for a DHS-wide thorough review of immigration enforcement to take place during the deportation moratorium.

## BIDEN'S POSITION HISTORICALLY

Beyond his current positions, it is also worth noting Biden's voting record and time as Vice President in the Obama Administration that show that he has presided over, and voted for, many of the very things that he now calls a "moral failing and national shame." While Biden's voting record shows some support for immigrants' rights, he also helped vote in the legislative infrastructure that made possible the mass deportations under Obama, particularly the 1996 Illegal Immigration and Immigration Reform Act, and also supported the 2006 Secure Fence Act, which extended the wall long before Trump's election.



*Vice-President Joe Biden posing with the Customs and Border Patrol Tucson Sector Honor Guard Drill Team in 2014.  
Credit: Carlos Ortiz*

# BIDEN'S TIMELINE

PRO-IMMIGRANT RIGHTS STANCE

MIXTURE

ANTI-IMMIGRANT RIGHTS STANCE

Voted to defeat a Jesse Helms amendment to give states power to deny benefits to immigrants.

1983

1986

Voted in favor of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), a bill that established a legalization program for undocumented people while also bolstering border enforcement.

Voted in favor of Ted Kennedy's Immigration Act of 1990, which restructured immigration law into a more skills-based system and halted deportation for family members of people legalized through IRCA.

1990

1993

Voted to maintain a travel ban on HIV-infected immigrants, including Haitian refugees imprisoned in a quarantine camp in Guantanamo Bay.

1994

Designed and shepherded through a crime bill which, in terms of immigration, created new crimes related to immigration law, set up tracking and detention centers and bolstered the Border Patrol.

1995

Voted in favor of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which expanded detention of non-citizens.

Voted to reject an attempt to cut family immigration by 10 percent.

1996

Voted in favor of the Immigration Control and Financial Responsibility Act (ICFRA), which doubled the Border Patrol and set up an employment-verification system.

ICFRA became the Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), significantly expanding the deportation apparatus. This legislation was rolled up into an appropriations bill for which Biden voted.

2002

Voted in favor of the Homeland Security Act that created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

2006

Voted in favor of the Senate version of an immigration reform package by George W. Bush, creating a guest-worker program, a limited legalization program, and bolstered border fortification.

Voted in favor of the Secure Fence Act.

Voted to prohibit immigrants from collecting Social Security based on work done when they were undocumented.

Voted against enhancing enforcement of labor protections for U.S. workers and guest workers.

2008–2016

As Vice-President did not vote for legislation, but shares responsibility for the Obama's Administration's mixed record:

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program

Record numbers of deportations and continued expansion of border militarization

## HISTORY OF BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR BORDER MILITARIZATION

Some of the core elements that make up the bipartisan militarized approach to the border were first developed by former Democrat president Bill Clinton. They included building walls in populated zones, using desolate and dangerous areas such as the Arizona desert as forms of deterrence, and increasing deportations. Clinton announced many of these measures in his 1995 State of the Union: “After years of neglect, this administration has taken a strong stand to stiffen the protection of our borders. We are increasing border controls by 50 percent. We are increasing inspections to prevent the hiring of illegal immigrants.”

With the adoption of the 1994 Prevention through Deterrence national border strategy, the border and immigration budget almost tripled from approximately \$1.5 billion to \$4 billion by 1999. That year, through a series of operations known as Hold the Line, Gatekeeper, and Safeguard, the Clinton administration began a deployment process that increased the number of agents from 4,000 to 10,000; and built walls fabricated from landing mats used in the wars in the Persian Gulf and Vietnam wars in cities such as Nogales and San Ysidro, traditional migrant border-crossing points. Other reinforcements included technologies such as motion sensors, radar, and surveillance cameras, some posted near the walls and directed into Mexico. This started an unprecedented growth pattern for the U.S. border and immigration apparatus that continues to this day.

In 1996, Clinton also implemented the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act which, among other things, significantly broadened the category of deportable offenses (see “aggravated felony” mentioned in the previous section). Expulsions increased almost immediately from just under 50,000 per year in 1995 to 150,000 in 1999, setting the stage for today’s deportation machine (see Graphic 1). Private prison corporations such as Corrections Corporation of America (now CoreCivic) and GEO Group began to profit significantly from the detention of migrants.

**TABLE 1: BORDER MILITARIZATION POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND OPERATIONS 1992–2020**

YEAR	BORDER MILITARIZATION OPERATIONS/STRATEGIES/POLICIES	ADMINISTRATION
1993	• Operation Hold the Line, El Paso	Bill Clinton <i>Democrat</i>
1994	• Operation Gatekeeper, California, Operation Safeguard, Arizona • IDENT, border biometric system	Bill Clinton <i>Democrat</i>
1996	• Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act	Bill Clinton <i>Democrat</i>
1997	• Operation Rio Grande Valley	Bill Clinton <i>Democrat</i>
1998	• Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System	Bill Clinton <i>Democrat</i>
2003	• Creation of the Department of Homeland Security	George W Bush <i>Republican</i>
2004	• American Shield Initiative	George W Bush <i>Republican</i>
2005	• Secure Border Initiative. SBInet—Massive border technology plan	George W Bush <i>Republican</i>

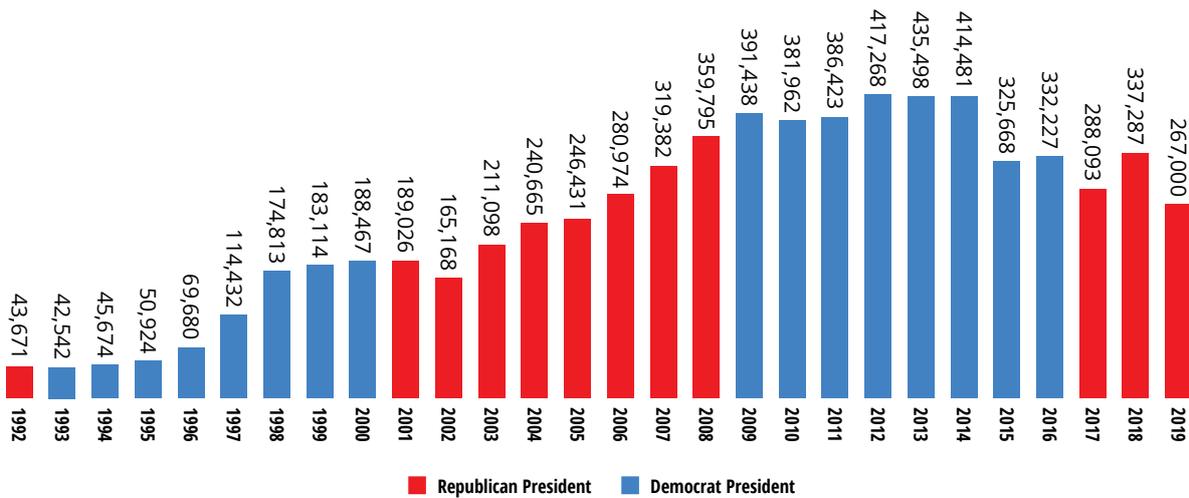
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure Fence Act</li> </ul>	George W Bush <i>Republican</i>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure Communities (Police/ICE collaboration) Initiated by Bush</li> </ul>	George W Bush <i>Republican</i>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure Communities (Police/ICE collaboration) Continued by Obama until 2014</li> </ul>	Barack Obama <i>Democrat</i>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arizona Technology Plan</li> <li>Extended to Texas</li> </ul>	Barack Obama <i>Democrat</i>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Muslim Ban (Executive Order 13769)</li> <li>Increased immigration enforcement (ICE raids)</li> <li>Attempted termination of DACA</li> <li>Cancellation of Temporary Protected Status for refugees from El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua and Sudan</li> </ul>	Donald Trump <i>Republican</i>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New guidelines for USCIS restricting asylum claims</li> <li>Border family separation/zero-tolerance policy</li> <li>Deployment of National Guards to border</li> </ul>	Donald Trump <i>Republican</i>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cap on resettlements to lowest-ever number (18,000)</li> <li>Remain in Mexico program</li> <li>Public charge rules changed, increasing ineligibility for green cards or visa extensions</li> </ul>	Donald Trump <i>Republican</i>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CDC order—closure of U.S. borders and immediate deportation of non-citizens without documentation<sup>16</sup></li> </ul>	Donald Trump <i>Republican</i>

By the time George W. Bush took office in January 2001, the basic strategy was in place. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Bush oversaw the largest expansion in the history of U.S. border enforcement with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Whereas the INS budget in 2000 was \$4.2 billion, by 2010 it had grown to \$17.2 billion (CBP and ICE combined).

The Bush administration implemented massive, resource-intensive border operations such as the Secure Border Initiative (along with its technological counterpart known as SBInet) and the Secure Fence Act of 2006. This introduced a range of new technologies into the border wall system, including drones, sophisticated surveillance cameras, aerostats, and a massive surge in hiring Border Patrol agents.

The Obama administration (2009–2017) continued to increase the annual budgets (though not as drastically as under George W. Bush), and Obama became the first president to deport nearly 3 million people during his eight-year term. In many ways Obama remained steadfast with what he said during a 2005 news conference: “We simply cannot allow people to pour into the United States undetected, undocumented, unchecked, and circumventing the line of people who are waiting patiently, diligently, and lawfully to become immigrants in this country.” The quote was lauded at the time by Donald Trump who tweeted, “I agree with President Obama 100%.”

**GRAPHIC 1: DEPORTATIONS 1992-2019**



Sources: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2018/table39>. \*<https://www.ice.gov/features/ERO-2019>

Graphic 1 shows the rapid rise in deportations, particularly under Obama. The numbers relate only to forced removals and therefore do not show the whole picture as many migrants and refugees also leave the United States in a so-called “voluntary departure”, whereby they agree to leave the country by a specific date rather than being deported. Under Obama, and again during the Trump administration, however, the focus was on forced removal rather than voluntary departure, in order to deter illegal border crossings. This is because forced removal goes on the record as a formal deportation, criminalizing deportees.

When Trump first set foot in the White House in 2017, the annual border and immigration enforcement budget had reached nearly \$20 billion. Companies were already cashing in as never before. Between 2008 and 2020, CBP and ICE issued 105,997 contracts to private corporations, amounting to \$55.1 billion—more than the amount that was spent between 1975 and 2002 on border and immigration enforcement (\$45.5 billion).

The Trump administration took full advantage of 20 years of increasing resources and policy foundations, simply ratcheting these to another level of discrimination and hostility toward non-citizens, immigrants, and asylum-seekers. Trump also initiated the “Muslim Ban”, to exclude nationals from Muslim-majority and African nations including Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, and also ended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. A modified “Muslim ban” was eventually upheld by the courts, although termination of DACA was overruled by the Supreme Court. But what the Trump administration will be best known for is the border wall. Between 2017 and 2020 Trump claims to have constructed 452 miles of wall, much of it replacing previously deployed vehicle barriers.

Throughout his 2020 campaign, Trump constantly boasted about the wall. At his rally in June in Phoenix, Arizona, he said: “We have cameras on it. We have sensors on it. It is just 20, 30 feet high. It’s very hard. We have anti-climb provision on the top. We have the whole deal. And it’s very powerful. And, by the way, where that wall is, nobody’s getting through. Nobody gets through.”

For Trump, the defense of the border was among the country's loftiest values: "We will defend our values, our voices, our faith, our heritage, our borders, our rights, and our God-given freedoms."<sup>17</sup> Trump's obsession with the wall may have been unique, but given the bipartisan nature of the border wall system, his support for border defense was simply voicing something long shared by the U.S. political system.

The most telling fact of the last 25 years is much bigger than Trump, and is bipartisan. Nearly 8,000 bodies that have been recovered in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands between 1998 and 2019.<sup>18</sup> Thousands more remain to be found as families continue to search for their lost loved ones. The organization No More Deaths has estimated that three to ten times as many people may have died or disappeared since today's border-enforcement strategy was implemented.<sup>19</sup> Margaret Regan, an author and journalist for Tucson Weekly, has called the U.S. southwest borderlands a "killing field." Many activists call it "death by design."

## BORDER INDUSTRY DONATIONS TO DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS

Between 1998 and 2018, the influence of the border industry is seen most clearly in the surge of lobbying when immigration or border bills are being presented. It is also a point when the companies seek to maximize the benefit from their years of campaign contributions to strategic legislators. In 2013, for example in the run-up to the comprehensive immigration bill known as the "Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act"—in which \$46 billion was dedicated to border militarization alongside a qualified form of legalization for undocumented people—all the Senate co-authors of the Act accepted money from the top contractors (such as EADS North America, Northrop Grumman and United Technologies), and registered lobbying visits more than doubled from 1,273 in 2010 to 2,618 in 2013.<sup>20</sup>

The power acquired by the industry in shaping policy and strategy was attested to by Michael Jackson, the Deputy Secretary of the DHS, at a SBI-net Industry Day in 2005. Jackson was previously Lockheed Martin's Chief Operating Officer and addressed a conference room full of would-be contract recipients, saying: "this is an unusual invitation. I want to make sure you have it clearly, that we're asking you to come back and tell us how to do our business. We're asking you. We're inviting you to tell us how to run our organization."<sup>21</sup>

This briefing draws on data from the [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org) database—run by the Center for Responsive Politics—on campaign contributions made by the largest border security and detention contractors in the 2020 election cycle.

It focuses on 13 companies: **CoreCivic, Deloitte, Elbit Systems, GEO Group, General Atomics, General Dynamics, G4S, IBM, Leidos, Lockheed Martin, L3Harris, Northrop Grumman, and Palantir**. Ten of these companies are listed as top border and immigration enforcement contractors in the *More Than a Wall* report.<sup>22</sup> They are also profiled in American Friend Service Committee's Investigate database and investment screening tool. This can be found at <https://investigate.afsc.org/borders> and, as mentioned above, is a live updated resource, listing, profiling and rating the main publicly traded companies involved in the construction and maintenance of the border, incarceration and detention of immigrants, and the provision of surveillance and monitoring technologies, tools or services.

It is important to mention that the border security industry consists of different types of companies from distinct political economies. Companies such as General Dynamics and Lockheed Martin have traditionally received most of their revenue from military contracts (and still do) as they expand their markets to include border security and mass surveillance technologies.<sup>23</sup> Many of these arms companies have played important roles in developing the virtual or surveillance wall and exert tremendous influence in Washington. Also, each company has its own dynamic, for example Boeing contracts with CBP and ICE have been reduced in recent years to a trickle, which is why it is not on this list, yet its past contracts (particularly SBINet) make it historically one of the top contractors. It is worth noting too that some companies not mentioned on the current list, like Raytheon, receive border contracts for international work through agencies like the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Raytheon has received hefty contracts to develop border surveillance systems in Jordan, the Philippines and Ukraine.<sup>24</sup>

None of the companies in the 13 listed provides only services in border militarization or immigration detention. Many are multinational conglomerates providing a range of products and services, so their campaign contributions and lobbying will relate to their wider portfolio.

Looking only at the United States, and specifically CBP and ICE contracts, there are security and data companies young and old, ranging from the "jack of all trades" consulting company Deloitte to the long-standing data-processing company IBM. Foreign companies, such as the Israeli-based Elbit Systems<sup>25</sup> and the UK/Denmark-based G4S,<sup>26</sup> also have lobbied and made campaign contributions to U.S. politicians while building border infrastructure and being awarded contracts. It is also worth mentioning that U.S.-based Allied Universal seems on the verge of buying out G4S for approximately \$5 billion, pending acceptance by G4S shareholders.<sup>27</sup> General Atomics has been CBP's primary contractor for drones, a market that analysts suggest will continue to flourish. CoreCivic<sup>28</sup> and GEO Group<sup>29</sup> are key contractors for ICE, playing a critical role in Enforcement and Removals Operations and detention. As noted earlier, the Biden administration has pledged to remove for-profit detention as part of its immigration platform. It is still very early in the administration, but a January executive order<sup>30</sup> (in continuation of an order issued by Obama) only severed federal contracts with private prison companies through the Department of Justice, not yet with DHS.

Leidos<sup>31</sup> has been added because of its greater role in providing technological services for the border. On July 6, 2020, Leidos won a \$960 million contract to develop TPVS (Traveler Processing and Vetting Software), a biometric travelers identification system. They also provide tech for the FBI's main biometric database, which is shared with DHS. Palantir, while not as significant in terms of the size of its contracts, has been added to the list because of its growing role as a major supplier of mass surveillance technologies to government agencies.<sup>32</sup>

In all cases, regardless of the type of business, the border security and immigrant-enforcement industry is an increasingly significant part of these companies' portfolios, due to its growth in recent decades—hence their interest in sustaining this booming business. This is demonstrated by the industry's lobbying visits and campaign contributions, as this brief will show (see also the *More Than a Wall* report).

## BORDER INDUSTRY DONATIONS TO TRUMP AND BIDEN

While companies cannot make overt donations to federal candidates, which has been prohibited since the early 1990s, company owners or employees can make contributions directly or via Political Action Committees (PACs). Contributions above \$200 must disclose a donor’s employer and occupation.<sup>33</sup> Political views among company owners and employees may vary, but the Center for Responsive Politics that runs the OpenSecrets.org database notes that their “research over more than 20 years shows a correlation between individuals’ contributions and their employers’ political interests... We have also observed that the donors who give more than \$200, and especially those who contribute at the maximum levels, are more commonly top executives in their companies, not lower-level employees.<sup>34</sup>

In 2010, an infamous U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* weakened the ban on corporate and union involvement in federal elections by allowing corporations, unions and other organizations to spend unlimited sums to fund political advertisements advocating the election (or defeat) of specific federal candidates. The decision continues to prohibit direct contributions to the candidates’ campaigns and coordination with the candidates about the advertisements, but this is notoriously hard to police. Moreover, it has led to the formation of “super PACs” whose donors can be concealed. In the case of the border industry, this means it is much harder to track their influence.

In addition, corporations may choose to channel funds through non-profit advocacy organizations, which are not required to declare their donors, and frequently form so-called “astroturfing campaigns”—disguised as grassroots campaigns and may lobby politicians but are beholden to corporate objectives. This briefing does not examine corporate funding of non-profits that advocate for border militarization and immigration enforcement, but there are many such groups.

**TABLE 2: CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2020**

COMPANY	PRODUCT FOR BORDER/IMMIGRATION	AGENCY	JOE BIDEN	DONALD TRUMP
CoreCivic	Detention	ICE	\$7,360	\$5,139
Deloitte	Jack of all trades	ICE & CBP	\$1,119,485	\$92,776
Elbit Systems	Surveillance Infrastructure	CBP	\$5,553	\$5,649
G4S	Transportation, private police	ICE & CBP	\$49,233	\$33,019
General Atomics	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles	CBP	\$82,974	\$51,665
General Dynamics	Surveillance infrastructure	CBP & ICE	\$390,550	\$170,854
GEO Group	Detention	ICE & CBP	\$6,568	\$122,340
IBM	Data processing	ICE & CBP	\$1,689,136	\$256,345
L3Harris	Surveillance infrastructure	CBP & ICE	\$219,615	\$125,409
Leidos	Information Technology including biometrics	CBP & ICE	\$306,252	\$101,031
Lockheed Martin	P-3 Orion surveillance planes	CBP	\$711,791	\$439,614
Northrop Grumman	VADER Radar system, biometrics	CBP & ICE	\$649,748	\$323,014
Palantir	Data processing for ICE	ICE	\$126,729	\$3,580
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$5,364,994</b>	<b>\$1,730,435</b>

Source: Data from Center for Responsive Politics. Based on data filed by FEC on December 26, 2020.

Table 2 draws on the Opensecrets.org database, which examines individual donations made by company owners and top employees from the 13 leading border and immigration enforcement firms up to December 26, 2020. Their declared contributions to the presidential campaigns are small relative to the the border industry's overall contributions to all federal candidates—particularly those in strategic policy-making bodies. Even so, it is noticeable that the top border companies contributed three times more to Joe Biden than to Donald Trump. Only GEO Group—notably a company involved particularly in detention—contributed significantly more to Trump.

While it is difficult to ascertain exactly why these top border and immigration contractors donated more money to the Biden campaign, the industry has traditionally shored up influence on both sides of the aisle, especially during an election season, as supporting Biden ensured continued influence if Trump were to lose—as, in fact, he did. It could also have indicated a proactive attempt by the border and detention industry to head off any change of direction on border policy after Trump—which, in the event, from a corporate perspective was prudent.

## **BORDER INDUSTRY DONATIONS TO KEY POLITICIANS**

While the focus is often on the presidency, much of the legislative work and earmarked funds for contracts with industry is undertaken by the legislature. In terms of border security, the House Homeland Security Committee and the House and Senate Appropriation Committees are where much of this is done. The House Homeland Security Committee handles legislation pertaining to border and immigration control, while the Appropriations Committee (drawn from both the Senate and the House) regulates federal government expenditure and earmarks money for potential contracts. Consequently, many corporations may consider it even more important to maintain good and long-term relationships with members of these committees than with the president.

Table 3 looks at the contributions by top border contractors (both its top employees and also through PACs) to the two main parties in the 2020 election cycle. This breakdown demonstrates two things. First is the vast amount of money going from top border contractors to the two parties and their many candidates—more than \$40 million (\$40,333,427). Second is that despite partisan divides and despite Trump's vigorous expansion of border militarization, the contributions are fairly evenly split between the two parties, although Democrats overall received more contributions from the big border contractors than did the Republicans (55 percent versus 45 percent). A few companies show strong preferences towards one political party. Detention companies, in particular CoreCivic, G4S and GEO Group, strongly favor Republicans along with military contractors Elbit Systems and General Atomics, while auditing and IT companies Deloitte, IBM and Palantir overwhelmingly favor the Democrats. Overall, however, most companies distribute their donations fairly evenly between the two parties.

Behind every contribution is corporate influence and determination to ensure that the lucrative business of border and immigration enforcement continues to expand under both Democrat and Republican administrations.

**TABLE 3: PROMINENT BORDER CONTRACTORS CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEDERAL CANDIDATES & PARTIES IN 2020 ELECTION CYCLE**

Donor	Total	Democrats and Liberals	Republicans and Conservatives	% Democrats	% Republicans
CoreCivic Inc	\$361,387	\$46,206	\$315,181	13%	87%
Deloitte LLP	\$5,655,260	\$3,528,842	\$2,102,895	62%	38%
Elbit Systems	\$112,549	\$21,897	\$90,634	19%	81%
G4S plc	\$207,730	\$80,404	\$126,678	39%	61%
General Atomics	\$2,621,386	\$838,442	\$1,780,188	32%	68%
General Dynamics	\$4,128,047	\$2,115,621	\$1,996,521	51%	49%
GEO Group	\$2,398,856	\$80,140	\$2,317,926	3%	97%
IBM Corp	\$6,948,208	\$6,201,705	\$690,081	89%	11%
L3Harris Technologies	\$2,788,425	\$1,451,181	\$1,334,524	52%	48%
Leidos Inc	\$2,292,518	\$1,214,412	\$1,067,333	53%	47%
Lockheed Martin	\$6,283,630	\$3,007,699	\$3,247,601	48%	52%
Northrop Grumman	\$6,204,858	\$3,324,252	\$2,866,067	54%	46%
Palantir Technologies	\$330,573	\$314,332	\$14,558	95%	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$40,333,427</b>	<b>\$22,225,133</b>	<b>\$17,950,187</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>45%</b>

Source: Data from Center for Responsive Politics. Based on data filed by FEC on December 26, 2020.

Corporate donations also aim to build longer-term influence, so it is important to analyze their trends over a number of years. Looking at the donations made by the 13 companies since 2010, it is clear these are definitely influenced by the party of the incumbent. So, Trump’s election led in most cases to a surge in giving to the Republicans, while in 2020 it shifted back to more equal contributions to both parties as the corporations looked to sustain influence regardless of who won the elections. In the 2018 electoral cycle, for instance, Northrop Grumman contributed \$3.12 million to Republican candidates compared to only \$2.43 million for the Democrats, but in 2020 the contributions swung back to favor the Democrats—\$3.32 million to Democrats and \$2.86 million to Republicans.<sup>35</sup> Even so, over the last 10 years, contributions from 11 of the 13 companies have more consistently favored Republicans (only IBM and Palantir have consistently favored Democrats).<sup>36</sup>

Tables 4, 5 and 6 examine the 2020 campaign in terms of corporate donations (top employees as well as PACs) to members of the Homeland Security Committee and Appropriations Committees. Cumulatively, these contributions far exceed their donations to the presidential campaigns, and the vast majority are made by PACs rather than individuals. Together the 13 companies profiled in this research briefing have contributed almost \$10 million (\$9,674,911) to the members of these committees. The biggest contributors overall are Deloitte, General Dynamics, L3Harris, Leidos, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, and nearly all donate substantially to both parties, although there is a definite preference for Republican candidates in all three Congress and Senate Committees.

**TABLE 4: TOP CONTRIBUTORS TO HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN 2020**

Donor	Total	Democrats	Republicans	% Democrats	% Republicans
Lockheed Martin	\$710,118	\$231,850	\$478,268	33%	67%
Northrop Grumman	\$572,081	\$286,507	\$285,574	50%	50%
General Dynamics	\$571,050	\$302,121	\$268,929	53%	47%
L3Harris Technologies	\$449,117	\$249,811	\$199,306	56%	44%
Leidos Inc	\$410,373	\$161,451	\$248,922	39%	61%
Deloitte LLP	\$377,562	\$197,040	\$180,522	52%	48%
General Atomics	\$278,067	\$111,100	\$166,967	40%	60%
GEO Group	\$76,941	\$52,941	\$24,000	69%	31%
CoreCivic Inc	\$19,000	\$8,500	\$10,500	45%	55%
Elbit Systems	\$17,301	\$2,501	\$14,800	14%	86%
IBM Corp	\$16,657	\$10,802	\$5,855	65%	35%
Palantir Technologies	\$10,250	\$10,250	\$0	100%	0%
G4S plc	\$116	\$91	\$25	78%	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,883,668</b>	<b>\$3,508,633</b>	<b>\$1,624,965</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>54%</b>

Source: Data from Center for Responsive Politics. Based on data filed by FEC on December 26, 2020.

**TABLE 5: TOP CONTRIBUTORS TO SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN 2020**

Donor	Total	Democrats	Republicans	% Democratic	% Republican
Lockheed Martin	\$1,053,975	\$444,679	\$609,296	42%	58%
Northrop Grumman	\$946,281	\$386,206	\$560,075	41%	59%
General Dynamics	\$904,897	\$459,287	\$443,110	51%	49%
Deloitte LLP	\$829,988	\$336,925	\$493,063	41%	59%
General Atomics	\$482,231	\$214,023	\$268,208	44%	56%
GEO Group	\$260,844	\$29,005	\$231,839	11%	89%
Leidos Inc	\$250,382	\$83,465	\$166,917	33%	67%
L3Harris Technologies	\$168,852	\$75,181	\$93,671	45%	55%
IBM Corp	\$151,975	\$94,899	\$57,076	62%	38%
CoreCivic Inc	\$127,601	\$10,002	\$117,599	8%	92%
Palantir Technologies	\$28,287	\$212	\$28,075	1%	99%
Elbit Systems	\$22,661	\$17,683	\$4,978	78%	22%
G4S plc	\$16,251	\$473	\$15,778	3%	97%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,244,225</b>	<b>\$2,152,040</b>	<b>\$3,089,685</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>59%</b>

Source: Data from Center for Responsive Politics. Based on data filed by FEC on December 26, 2020.

**TABLE 6: TOP CONTRIBUTORS TO HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN 2020**

Donor	Total	Democrats	Republicans	% Democratic	% Republican
Northrop Grumman	\$165,148	\$86,388	\$78,760	52%	48%
Lockheed Martin	\$146,540	\$68,138	\$78,402	46%	54%
L3Harris Technologies	\$139,068	\$34,377	\$104,691	25%	75%
Deloitte LLP	\$131,320	\$67,337	\$63,983	51%	49%
General Dynamics	\$119,274	\$71,384	\$47,890	60%	40%
Leidos Inc	\$82,329	\$30,508	\$51,821	37%	63%
General Atomics	\$42,584	\$5,708	\$36,876	13%	87%
GEO Group	\$31,353	\$5,003	\$26,350	16%	84%
IBM Corp	\$28,976	\$23,019	\$5,957	79%	21%
Elbit Systems	\$16,658	\$508	\$16,150	3%	97%
CoreCivic Inc	\$7,775	\$0	\$7,775	0%	100%
Palantir Technologies	\$5,897	\$5,847	\$50	99%	1%
G4S plc	\$5,131	\$5,035	\$96	98%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$922,053</b>	<b>\$403,252</b>	<b>\$518,801</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>56%</b>

Source: Data from Center for Responsive Politics. Based on data filed by FEC on December 26, 2020.

Table 7 looks at the border industry's contributions to strategic members of the Homeland Security Committee, and Congressional and Senate Appropriations Committees. The donations are made overwhelmingly by company PACs rather than by individuals within the companies. The table focuses on the Chair of each Committee and the Ranking Member (Minority party leader) as the most politically significant and therefore strategic members of each committee. In addition, Jack Reed (\$426,413) is included due to very large contributions he has received from border industry giants, as well as Henry Cuellar (\$134,400), who has received sizable contributions and been vocal in his support for border militarization. The contributions range from \$58,250 (Bennie Thompson) to \$442,406 (Kay Granger). In total, the eight members of these strategic committees received **\$1,938,050** in donations from border industry contractors.

The table again highlights the way the main military contractors (General Atomics, General Dynamics, L3Harris, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman) are the most consistent contributors, providing funds to all the strategic committee members, followed by Deloitte and Leidos.

**TABLE 7: BORDER INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTIONS TO KEY MEMBERS OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE (2020 CYCLE)**

NAME / PARTY	COMMITTEE	CONTRIBUTIONS	TOTAL
Bennie Thompson <i>Democrat</i> 	House Homeland Security (Chair)	Leidos \$17,250 Deloitte \$10,000 Northrop Grumman \$7,500 Lockheed Martin \$7,000 G4S \$5,000 General Dynamics \$5,000 GEO Group \$5,000 L3Harris \$1,500 <sup>37</sup>	\$58,250
Mike Rogers <i>Republican</i> 	House Homeland Security (Ranking Member)	Leidos \$36,000 General Atomics \$26,600 Deloitte \$20,000 General Dynamics \$17,500 Northrop Grumman \$17,500 L3Harris \$17,000 Lockheed Martin \$15,000 Elbit Systems \$11,500 GEO Group \$5,000 <sup>38</sup>	\$166,100
Richard Shelby <i>Republican</i> 	Senate Appropriations (Chair)	Lockheed Martin \$141,450 General Dynamics \$78,000 Leidos \$65,000 Northrop Grumman \$43,000 General Atomics \$39,200 Deloitte \$36,000 Palantir \$27,500 <sup>39</sup>	\$430,150
Patrick Leahy <i>Democrat</i> 	Senate Appropriations (Vice Chair)	Lockheed Martin \$91,851 General Dynamics \$49,833 Deloitte \$40,000 Northrop Grumman \$31,602 General Atomics \$15,000 <sup>40</sup>	\$228,286
Rosa Delauro <i>Democrat</i> 	House Appropriations (Chair)	General Dynamics \$12,500 Lockheed Martin \$12,045 Leidos \$10,000 Northrop Grumman \$7,500 General Atomics \$7,000 L3Harris \$1,000 <sup>41</sup>	\$52,045
Kay Granger <i>Republican</i> 	House Appropriations (Ranking Member)	Lockheed Martin \$207,726 Leidos \$56,302 General Dynamics \$43,804 General Atomics \$42,350 L3Harris \$32,500 Northrop Grumman \$22,811 Deloitte \$16,007 Elbit Systems of America \$10,300 IBM \$5,606 GEO Group \$5,000 <sup>42</sup>	\$442,406
Henry Cuellar <i>Democrat</i> 	House Appropriations (Homeland Security Subcommittee)	GEO Group \$49,400 General Dynamics \$15,000 Northrop Grumman \$15,000 Leidos \$11,500 Deloitte \$10,000 Lockheed Martin \$10,000 L3Harris \$8,500 General Atomics \$7,500 CoreCivic \$5,000 Elbit Systems \$2,500 <sup>43</sup>	\$134,400
Jack Reed <i>Democrat</i> 	Senate Appropriations	General Dynamics \$133,875 Lockheed Martin \$95,300 L3Harris \$54,625 Northrop Grumman \$43,250 General Atomics \$41,150 Leidos \$34,000 Deloitte \$17,503 IBM \$5,610 Elbit Systems \$1,100 <sup>44</sup>	\$426,413
<b>Total contributions</b>			<b>\$1,938,050</b>

Contributions to both candidates' campaign committees and their leadership PACs. Data from Center for Responsive Politics. Based on data filed by FEC on December 26, 2020.

Read more on how the border industry has used campaign contributions, lobbying and a revolving door to both advance border militarization and reap the profits in *More Than a Wall* (pp. 60–70).



## POLITICAL PROFILES

### Rep Henry Cuellar

*Member House Appropriations Committee*



In 2018, Texas Democrat Rep. Henry Cuellar—a member of the House Appropriations Committee and its Homeland Security subcommittee—wrote an op-ed for CNN in which he called the border wall “a 14th century solution for a 21st century challenge.” Although many Democrats had previously approved and voted for a border wall, Cuellar expertly positioned the Democrat party as anti-wall and anti-Trump while still defending the ever-increasing militarization of the border. As Cuellar explained, “Instead of a wall, we should increase the use of modern technology, including cameras, xed towers, and aerial and underground sensors.” Not a concrete wall, but a technological or virtual wall, in progress since the initiation of the 2006 SBInet program.<sup>45</sup> This technology-led approach is likely to be the dominant approach in the Democratic Party under the Biden administration.



Cuellar did not disclose in the op-ed that for the 2017–2018 election cycle he received campaign contributions from top border contractors such as Northrop Grumman (\$15,000), Boeing Corporation (\$15,000), or Lockheed Martin (\$10,000), all of which have developed and have interest in further developing surveillance technology, biometrics, aircraft, and other border barriers.

Nor did he mention that from 2007 to 2018 he received more money from the private prison corporations GEO Group and CoreCivic (\$54,400) than any other politician from either party. When pressed about this by journalist Alex Kotch of *TYT*, Cuellar said, “GEO is one of the largest employers in my district and plays an important role in maintaining our public safety. Without [private detention centers] rapists, murderers, and other offenders would not be incarcerated and instead present a clear threat to our communities.”<sup>46</sup> He made this claim despite the fact that people incarcerated in GEO Group immigration detention are not charged with any crime, but rather held for administrative reasons.

With one stroke of the pen, Cuellar gave free advertising to companies developing border surveillance technologies, which of course showed up for Cuellar’s 2020 campaign launch. GEO Group again leads with \$49,400 in donations, with Deloitte, General Dynamics, Leidos, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman each contributing between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

In March 2020, during the primary, Cuellar’s main electoral challenge came from the progressive candidate Jessica Cisneros, who stood on a migrant and climate justice platform. He barely got through, having to rely on massively outspending her with substantial contributions from the border industrial complex. Cisneros challenged Cuellar during the race to give the money donated by these corporations to immigrant communities.<sup>47</sup> She said that her competitive race was proof that “a brown girl from the border with a whole community behind her could take on the machine.”<sup>48</sup> Cuellar easily fended off Republican Sandra Whitten to win another term in November 2020.

## Kay Granger Rep

**Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee**



Between 2000 and 2005, when the San Diego-based company General Atomics spent approximately \$660,000 on 86 trips for legislators, aides, and their spouses, Republican congresswoman Kay Granger—now the Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee—was singled out for financial support. During the 2004 and 2005 cycles, the year that General Atomics received its first unmanned aerial surveillance system contract worth \$14.1 million with CBP (the same Predator B drones used in U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq), Granger received \$11,000 in campaign contributions. For General Atomics, this first contract opened the gateway to more than \$500 million as the company provided CBP's first drone fleet.



In the 2020 cycle, General Atomics continues to be a top contributor to Granger (her fourth largest) at over \$40,000. Other top companies include Lockheed Martin with more than \$207,006, General Dynamics with \$43,804 and Leidos at \$56,302. L3 Harris Technologies, Elbit Systems, Deloitte, IBM, GEO Group, Northrop Grumman are among 10 contributors with donations ranging from \$5,000 to \$32,500.

Among other things, in 2018 Granger was the sponsor of the Make America Secure Again (a military and homeland security spending bill). Part of it was rolled up in the 2018 Homeland Security Omnibus Appropriations bill that earmarked \$1.57 billion for the border wall system.

On February 13, speaking on the reallocation of funds from the Department of Defense to the border, Granger stated, "I unequivocally support President Trump's efforts to secure our nation's borders and support our men and women in uniform. Democrats have refused to work with us on border security, which has forced the President to redirect funds from other defense programs in the short term in order to secure the southern border. The President has come up with a reasonable approach that will provide the funding necessary to address the border crisis without jeopardizing our national security."<sup>49</sup>

Like Cuellar, Granger faced a primary challenger in March—but in her case she easily dispatched Chris Putnam. She was also the overwhelming winner in November election against Democrat Lisa Welch.



When discussing an immigration reform bill (S.2611) in 2006, the Democrat Senator Jack Reed argued that the Bush “administration has simply lost control of the border,” citing the fact that arrests had declined under Bush compared to Clinton. He repeated a frequent conservative talking point: “The continuous flow of illegal immigrants across our southern border in particular in search of higher paying jobs in the United States strains our Nation’s labor market and resources such as hospitals and schools and law enforcement.” Despite this, he was happy to highlight the most “significant” parts of the bill, expressing that he was “particularly pleased with the focus on technology.”



He said that “this bill requires the Department of Homeland Security to create a virtual fence along the borders using unmanned aerial vehicles, cameras, sensors, tethered aerostat radars, and other surveillance equipment.”<sup>50</sup>

Seemingly contradicting himself, he also said in the same speech that he did not support a wall and was one of the few politicians to mention the deaths caused by forcing people into dangerous terrain, the Prevention Through Deterrence strategy. Reed perhaps epitomizes the current mainstream Democrat position, which is to oppose the cruelty and deadliness of the border, while in practice continuing to support the infrastructure and technology that facilitates it.

On Reed’s web page describing his immigration platform in the 2020 election, he underscores how often he has moved to vote on comprehensive immigration reform, including the 2013 Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, which included both a limited legalization plan and \$45 billion dedicated to border enforcement, particularly technologies.<sup>51</sup>

In the 2020 election, his primary campaign contributors included corporations involved in technologies used to control the border. The top three were General Dynamics (\$133,875), Lockheed Martin (\$95,300) and Raytheon (\$59,710) followed by L3Harris Technologies (\$54,625) and General Atomics (\$41,150). In November 2020, Reed easily defeated his Republican challenger, Allen Walters.

## THE DHS SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS AND THE BIDEN-HARRIS TRANSITION TEAM



President Joe Biden's newly appointed Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas has been praised as the first Latino head of DHS. The Cuban American has also been given credit for the DACA program, through which more than 700,000 youth have benefited.<sup>52</sup> Mayorkas was the Deputy Secretary of the DHS from 2013 to 2016 and the director of US Citizenship & Immigration Services from 2009 to 2013. He was also on the Barack Obama Presidential Transition Team in 2008.<sup>53</sup>

Between leaving DHS in 2016 until his nomination in 2021, Mayorkas was employed as a lawyer with the firm WilmerHale. In January, Mayorkas disclosed that he earned \$3.3 million from 2018 to 2020, representing a variety of companies, including two mentioned on the list of border companies, Northrop Grumman and Leidos. Part of this work and salary was consulting companies on implementing safety protocols for COVID 19.<sup>54</sup> Mayorkas had previously worked on Zika and Ebola with DHS.

Though led by Ur Jaddou of the non-profit America's Voice, most of the 23 members of the Biden-Harris DHS transition team came from private companies. Like Mayorkas, the majority worked for DHS during the Obama administration. To name some examples, Subhasri Ramanathan, an employee of principal CBP contractor Deloitte, is a volunteer on the transition team (all members are listed as volunteers). Another is Paul Rosen of Cromwell Moring, a law firm that says it is "internationally recognized" for its representation of "Fortune 500 companies in high-stakes litigation."<sup>55</sup> Before Rosen's employment with Cromwell, the former federal prosecutor held several senior leadership positions in DHS, including serving as chief of staff for ICE.<sup>56</sup>

Along similar lines is the former senior cybersecurity official at DHS, Robert Silvers, who now works at another global law firm Paul Hastings. Another volunteer is John Cohen from the Argonne National Research Center, which originated in the Manhattan Project in the 1940s (that developed the US' first nuclear weapons). Cohen was a former DHS counter-terrorism coordinator during the Obama administration before taking up his current position as the Global Threat Program Developer for Argonne.

Besides Ur Jaddou, one other volunteer on the transition team who could be seen to represent human rights concerns is Andrea Flores, the Deputy Director of Immigration Policy for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The majority, however, have moved through the revolving door of government and the private sector. Much still remains to be seen, but a corporate-centric team comprising many former Obama staffers points to a transition going back to a pre-Trump Homeland Security Department.

## CORPORATE PROFILES

Below are featured a few of the 13 leading border security and immigrant enforcement corporations, highlighting their role in the industry, key government contracts they have secured, as well as their campaign contributions to politicians who have a strategic role in border policies. As detailed earlier in the report, while technically the corporations themselves can't contribute directly to federal candidates, their chief executives and high-ranking employees do contribute either individually or through PACs and the evidence shows that their giving aligns with their corporations' commercial interests.



The world's largest private prison company, CoreCivic<sup>57</sup> owns or manages 21 facilities with a detention capacity for ICE of 17,243 persons. Over the last 15 years CoreCivic has received ICE contracts worth nearly \$1.4 billion. Like GEO Group, most of its contributions of almost \$361,387 for the 2020 campaigns went to Republicans, including to the party's senatorial and congressional campaign committees. Over the last decade, its contributions have overwhelmingly gone to Republicans (\$339,000 versus \$18,000 to Democrats in the 2018 election cycle).<sup>58</sup> A quote from the CoreCivic's annual report in 2005, gives a rare glimpse into how such businesses influence policy-makers: "The demand for our facilities and services could be adversely affected by the relaxation of enforcement efforts, leniency in conviction and sentencing practices or through the decriminalization of certain activities that are currently proscribed by our criminal laws. For instance, any change with respect to drugs and controlled substances or illegal immigration could affect the number of persons arrested, convicted and sentenced, thereby potentially reducing demand for correctional facilities to house them" (cited in *More Than a Wall*, p. 54). These companies know that their fiscal health relies on continuing and increasing U.S. border enforcement.



Between CBP and ICE, the consulting company Deloitte<sup>59</sup> has received nearly \$800 million in contracts through its Border, Trade and Immigration account. When in 2018 there was activist pressure within and outside the company about these contracts, Deloitte sent an internal email saying that "our BTI team deploys hundreds of practitioners who proudly serve or have served to help facilitate trade, support immigration benefits, assist our clients in preventing and responding swiftly to terrorist incidents, thwart drug smuggling, human trafficking, and transnational organized crime, and launch travel programs that serve the public."<sup>60</sup> In 2018, Deloitte hired Jim Brown, who had worked at ICE and INS for 27 years. According to Brown's LinkedIn profile, one of his "accomplishments" at Deloitte was working with the "ICE facilities management group" on "detention bed space utilization and optimization processes."

Of the company's contributions of \$5,655,260 in 2020, 62 percent went to the Democrats and 38 percent to the Republicans. This included \$377,562 to the House Appropriations Committee and \$829,988 to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Like most other companies, Deloitte was generous to both Republican and Democrat campaign committees, but overwhelmingly favored Joe Biden (\$1,119,485) over Donald Trump (\$92,776). Deloitte has contributed to all but one of the strategic members of the Congress and Senate Appropriations committees and Homeland Security Committee.

Over the last decade, the company has provided substantial contributions to both parties but has favored Republicans.



The world's second largest private prison corporation, GEO Group<sup>61</sup> runs 14 detention centers for ICE with a combined capacity of 14,966 beds. Over the last 15 years the company has received contracts worth more than \$2 billion, making it one of ICE's top contractors. According to the Detention Watch Network, companies make \$134 per person per day, and more than 73 percent of immigrants are detained in prisons run by private companies. Ninety-seven percent of GEO Group's \$2.4 million contributions have gone to Republicans, although it is the single largest contributor to the Democrat Congressman Henry Cuellar on the House Appropriations Committee (\$49,400). The company contributed \$122,340 to Donald Trump's campaign, and only \$6,568 to Joe Biden's. GEO Group's contributions over the last decade have consistently and strongly favored Republicans.



The L3Harris<sup>62</sup> corporation stated that "there is no greater honor than to help those who put their lives on the line for others and L3 employees take great pride in the work they do to support the safety and security of the nation's protectors with the best available products and systems." These include surveillance systems, "night conqueror" cameras, sensor technology, and contracts from CBP worth \$894 million (see *More Than a Wall*, p. 43). L3Harris is also the main contractor for CBP's Tethered Aerostat Radar System (TARS), large, blimp-like unmanned aircraft that surveil the U.S.-Mexico border. In addition, L3Harris-made Stingray and Hailstorm cell site simulators (cell phone surveillance technologies) have been used by CBP and ICE to target immigrants. The company has received nearly \$250,000 in contracts from ICE.

Fifty-two percent of its \$2,788,425 in campaign contributions went to Democrats.<sup>63</sup> It has contributed a total of \$139,068 to House Homeland Security members. Like other companies, L3Harris contributed to all the campaign committees, both Republican and Democrat, and made sure Kay Granger and Jack Reed of the House and Senate Appropriations committee received a good share.

Over the last decade, L3Harris has donated almost equally to Republicans and Democrats.



When military and IT company Leidos<sup>64</sup> secured a \$960 million CBP contract in 2020, Vicki Schmanske, Leidos Intelligence Group president, said that “Leidos has a rich history with CBP, helping safeguard our ports and borders, and facilitating commerce and travel.” This contract is for developing CBP’s new Traveler Processing and Vetting Software (TPVS), which will fulfil the agency’s goal of shifting its vetting of international passengers from biographic data to biometric data. Put simply, instead of relying on people’s travel documents (passports), CBP will take all international travelers’ biometric information before they arrive at the U.S. and compare it to its databases. Not by coincidence, Leidos is also the contractor for FBI’s Next Generation Identification, the agency’s main biometrics database, which feeds into the DHS Homeland Advanced Recognition Technology (HART) biometric database (see the Northrop Grumman section below).

Leidos’ TPVS contract with CBP is in addition to the company’s other contracts for \$476 million has with CBP (see *More Than a Wall*, p. 33l), mainly for X-ray and other imaging technologies to inspect vehicles at border crossings. Leidos<sup>65</sup> contributed \$1,214,412 to Democrats in 2020 (53%) and \$1,067,333 to Republicans (47%). This marks a shift from the 2018 election cycle, when Leidos contributed \$616,000 to the Republicans and \$493,000 to the Democrats.



When Lockheed Martin<sup>66</sup> opened up a Border Enforcement Solutions Center in 2006, its CEO Bob Stevens said that “this investment demonstrates Lockheed Martin’s commitment to help our nation secure its border.” Since then, the company has received nearly \$1 billion from CBP (see *More Than a Wall*, p. 44), primarily for the P3 Orion maritime surveillance planes. The company also received nearly \$3 million in contracts from ICE during the early 2000s.

During the 2020 election cycle, Lockheed Martin<sup>67</sup> contributed \$6.28 million to federal candidates, making it the second biggest campaign contributor (after Boeing) in the defense sector—48 percent to Democrats and 52 percent to Republicans, including \$711,791 to Biden and \$439,614 to Trump. The company contributed \$146,540 to members of the House Homeland Security Committee, \$710,118 to the House Appropriations Committee and \$1,053,975 to the Senate Appropriations Committee, including \$95,300 to Rhode Island Democrat Jack Reed, who sought re-election in 2020. Republican Kay Granger, for example, received \$207,006. Notably, both Granger and Reed have received much more than the presidential candidates. Lockheed Martin made indirect contributions to the campaign committees for both parties.

Over the last decade, the company has provided substantial contributions to both parties but has favored Republicans.



Top arms dealer Northrop Grumman,<sup>68</sup> whose revenue was \$30 billion in 2018, has described its border work as “drawing the line against terror... Our trusted solutions create tough barriers against these threats—while keeping the flow of trade and legal traffic moving.” The company’s nearly \$400 million contracts with CBP include VADER (Vehicle and Dismount Exploitation Radar) that equip several of CBP’s Predator B drones. This is one of the many examples of military equipment used in Afghanistan and Iraq and now in border control. HART is one of the world’s largest biometric databases, able to store information about at least 500 million people and hold multiple forms of biometrics—“from face recognition to DNA”. In 2018, CBP also awarded the company the role of primary technology integrator of its HART system that is replacing CBP’s previous biometric system known as IDENT. Northrop Grumman has also received nearly \$240 million in contracts from ICE since 2005, and provides IT for ICE’s Intelligence and Decision Support Branch.

In line with Northrop Grumman’s contributions<sup>69</sup> going overwhelmingly to Biden in the presidential election (see Table 2), the corporation gave 54 percent of its contributions to Democrats in the 2020 cycle and 46 percent to Republicans (Table 4). Northrop Grumman is the third largest defense contributor to federal candidates at \$6.2m. Like many of the other top arms companies, Northrop Grumman has interests and contracts well beyond the border, especially the military. The company can, however, wield tremendous influence on immigration and border policy, and was the biggest contributor (\$165,148) to members of the House Homeland Security Committee for the 2020 election.

The company is also a major contributor to the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. In 2020, the company contributed \$946,281 to members of the Senate Appropriations Committee and \$572,081 to members of the House Appropriations Committee.

Over the last decade, the company has provided substantial contributions to both parties but has favored Republicans.



IT company Palantir<sup>70</sup>—contracted to develop ICE’s case-management software with a series of contracts since 2011 (worth \$97.3 million)—has been a focal point for activists. Migrant justice organizations such as Mijente have shown that Palantir’s Integrated Case Management (ICM) and FALCON Search and Analysis ensure a connection between local law enforcement and ICE, “allowing for more pinpointed enforcement actions.” Its contributions<sup>71</sup> overwhelmingly favor the Democrats at 95 percent (\$314,332) with only \$14,558 (5 percent) going to Republicans. Over the last decade, the company’s donations have consistently and strongly favored Democrats over Republicans.

Palantir also has ties to at least two incoming administration officials: Avril Haines, tapped to be the Director of National Intelligence, acted as a consultant to Palantir,<sup>72</sup> while Olorunnipa Badejo, who will join the Biden administration as associate counsel in the Office of White House Counsel, worked as in-house counsel at Palantir.<sup>73</sup>

## #NoTechforICE

No Tech for ICE is a campaign to cut the corporate ties between Silicon Valley and immigration enforcement. Tech companies like Amazon, Anduri, Microsoft, Palantir, Salesforce, and Thomson Reuters collectively have dozens of contracts with ICE and CBP worth millions of dollars to provide data analysis, targeting capabilities, cloud computing, physical surveillance, and more to surveil, incarcerate, and deport immigrants. The No Tech for ICE campaign seeks to expose these links and organize with students, academics, workers, shareholders, lawmakers, and others to cut the contracts. <https://notechforice.com/>

## Other companies

**Amazon Web Services** hosts Palantir's ICM program, which creates detailed profiles to track immigrants and has also come under scrutiny by migrant rights activists. Palantir pays Amazon about \$600,000 a month for that federally authorized service, a condition of its contract with ICE. In the 2020 elections, Amazon<sup>74</sup> overwhelmingly supported the Democrats: \$9,393,796 (85 percent) compared to \$1,699,553 to Republicans (15 percent). This is consistent with its contributions in the last decade, which have consistently and strongly favored Democrats.

**Accenture**,<sup>75</sup> the multinational consulting, strategy, and technology company, points to another important experience—the power of public pressure to force companies to divest from their role in the border security and surveillance complex. The company—featured in *More than a wall* (p. 35)—received a five-year \$297 million contract in 2017 to recruit and hire 7,500 so called “surge applicants,” including 5,000 for the US Border Patrol (which would bring its ranks to 26,000) and 2,000 other CBP agents to work at official ports of entry. Washington was investing nearly \$40,000 for each new employee recruited. Following significant media scrutiny because of the cost of the contract and amid significant resistance from Accenture's workers to the Border Patrol contract, CBP canceled it in April 2019.<sup>76</sup>

Accenture dedicated significantly more of its 2020 campaign contributions to the Democrats (\$2,050,365) than to the Republicans (\$369,310). Historically, however, its contributions have tended to favor Republicans.

Read more on these companies and other giants in the border security industry in *More than a Wall* (pp. 30–50) and on AFSC's online database: <https://investigate.afsc.org/borders>



## CONCLUSION

On January 19, when then DHS Secretary nominee Alejandro Mayorkas was asked what he would do about the caravan, of mostly Hondurans, that was headed for the U.S. southern border. He responded that the United States would be committed to respecting the law on asylum. According to Mayorkas, if people were found to qualify “under the law to remain in the United States, then we will apply the law accordingly. If they do not qualify to remain in the United States, then they won’t.”<sup>77</sup>

The day before Mayorkas stood before the Senate, nearly 8,000 people crossed the border from Honduras into Guatemala. Some were heading to Mexico, but most were seeking safety in the United States. Many of the people in the caravan reported that they were headed north in the devastating aftermath of two successive category four hurricanes that hit Honduras and Nicaragua in November 2020.<sup>78</sup> In Guatemala, the caravan was almost immediately broken up by U.S.-trained military and police that forced them, sometimes violently, from the highway.<sup>79</sup>

Since 9/11 the United States has made a concerted effort to extend its borders abroad by training police and military and transferring resources to other countries. For the last 10 years, there has been a special emphasis on Central America. While the Biden administration will surely alleviate hardships faced by many asylum-seekers, the proportion of people receiving such protection, even before Trump, was very low. Nor is there as yet any climate-related status for those displaced by environmental devastation. As Mayorkas would imply the very next day, the people in the caravan were not going to qualify. Not qualifying meant they would be blocked at the U.S. border.

As people head north through the border and incarceration apparatus that extends from Guatemala through Mexico and the United States, they will also be traveling through a border-enforcement regime developed and manufactured by a phalanx of powerful companies. Perhaps Northrop Grumman will help border officials track facial recognition data as it develops CBP’s newest biometric system. Maybe Lockheed Martin-manufactured P-3 Orion planes will track people moving along the coastlines. Perhaps Deloitte, from CBP’s National Tracking Center in Northern Virginia, will play a part in vetting people who attempt to fly to the United States. And, if they are arrested by the border guards, perhaps CoreCivic will incarcerate them as they face expulsion from the country. In short, all these companies have a strong interest in ensuring that the United States continues to fortify its borders.

This corporate complex wields its influence in a number of ways, including campaign contributions to key politicians, presidential candidates, and members of strategic legislative committees. Many of these companies have large lobbying budgets they can use to apply pressure during crucial debates on legislation concerning the U.S.–Mexico border and immigration, including the appropriations process.

Certainly, the Joe Biden administration will fend off some of the hostility toward non-citizens and asylum-seekers that would have continued to intensify, with brutal and deadly consequences, if Trump had won. There is little evidence as yet, however, that Biden will dismantle their very violent, discriminatory, and carceral foundations. Biden and the Democratic Party’s historical record and ties to the border industry suggest that the corporations featured in this briefing can

expect to continue to benefit from a profitable border and immigration system already in a long pattern of growth.

There is nothing to suggest that Biden has any intention to remove these corporations' privileged place in Washington, or their access to powerful policy-makers and key committees—in fact their representatives were in the DHS transition team, and the nominee Mayorkas has had direct relationships with some of them as a lawyer and consultant in the private sector. The incessant corporate lobbying on many fronts cultivates this fusion of Washington and business, as does the “revolving door” (discussed in *More Than a Wall*). This nefarious circuit of power, profit and influence needs the fullest of reckonings.

It is critical to understand this. The bipartisan border industrial complex is a much bigger impediment to a humane response to immigration than Trump was—but it is also what helped create Trump. His rhetoric, and the conservative stance in general, on border and immigration enforcement, insist on the lack of bipartisan consensus about a “secure border”. In reality, as this briefing has demonstrated, the opposite is true. The centerpiece of Trump's 2016 campaign was the construction of a border wall, which had already long existed. Effectively, Trump was more of a manifestation than a creator of a world of draconian immigration and border policies. He was then sustained by them, and ratcheted them up further, but it is mistaken to think that removing Donald Trump will bring an end to the horrors of the border and immigration. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Nevertheless, the political change in the 2020 elections—given the COVID19 pandemic and the historic achievements of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and now the results of the election—offer a ripe moment for the Democrats, with the full power of the government, to examine and change course on border and immigration issues. Given that the Democratic establishment has adopted an anti-wall posture for the last four years, there is an opening to change direction if movements and activists within and outside the Democrat Party are able to seize it. As this briefing has shown, the obstacles are immense, especially as border and immigration budgets have grown by 6,000 percent since 1980 and 99,000 contracts worth \$45 billion have been awarded by CBP and ICE since 2006. Corporate interests, which have hugely profited from an ever-expanding militarized border and repression, will not give up that lucrative market without a fight.

Biden needs not only to reverse Trump's policies, but also to address Prevention Through Deterrence. He needs to stop the construction of and dismantle the border wall that he himself voted to build, and repair the harms done to border communities and the environment. A moratorium on deportations should also include a thorough examination of the 1996 legislation and what constitutes a deportable offense or an “aggravated felony.”

To do all this, it will be critical that Biden and the Democrat Party break with the border industrial complex.

The constant push for more border walls, more technologies, more incarceration, more criminalization is in a holding pattern, stuck in a corporate dynamic with a doctrine of constant growth. It is time to expose the contractors, lobbyists, campaign contributions, influence on policy-makers, and ultimately the profits made by the border industrial complex. The “business as usual” border regime will inflict acute suffering on millions of human beings. Just as tobacco firms have finally

been removed from forums on health, and oil corporations from forums on the environment—albeit after decades of campaigning on these issues—arms and security corporations should no longer play a part in forums and policy-making bodies on migration issues.

Some Democrats have shown a willingness to refuse corporate funds from sectors such as fossil fuels in response to pressure from the climate justice movement or from police unions because of pressure from Black Lives Matter. A concerted effort by Democrats to break with the arms and security industry could go a long way to changing policy in Washington—2021 is the time to do it.

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The border security industry in the run-up to the 2020 US elections contributed more money to the Democrats than the Republicans despite their very different rhetoric on border and immigration. This briefing examines 13 of the US' key border security contractors, their financial contributions to strategic committees and legislators, and the way they have shaped a bipartisan approach in favor of border militarization for more than three decades. It suggests that a real change in border and immigration policies will require the Democrats to break with the industry that helps finance them.



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