# POSITION DESCRIPTION

**General counsel, department of homeland security**

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs |
| Agency Mission | To ensure that homeland is safe, secure and resilient against terrorism and other potential threats. |
| Position Overview | The general counsel (GC) is the chief legal officer of DHS and is responsible for all of the department's legal determinations and for overseeing all of its attorneys. The GC is also the department's regulatory policy officer, managing the rulemaking program and ensuring that all DHS regulatory actions comply with relevant statutes and executive orders. |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Homeland Security |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | In fiscal 2015, DHS had $42.573 billion in outlays and 166,777 total employment. The Office of the General Counsel has over 1,800 dedicated attorneys at headquarters and at operating components. The GC has four direct reports: * Two deputy general counsels
* Principal Deputy General Counsel
* Chief of Staff

In addition, the GC indirectly manages a team of seventeen. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Provides complete, accurate and timely legal advice on possible courses of action for the department.
* Ensures that Homeland Security policies are implemented lawfully, quickly and efficiently.
* Protects the rights and liberties of any Americans who come into contact with the department and ensures that the department's efforts to secure the nation are consistent with the civil rights and liberties of all citizens.
* Facilitates quick responses to congressional requests for information.
* Represents the department in venues across the country, including in the immigration courts of the U.S.
* Identifies legal requirements that apply to departmental policies and procedures and assists in policy and operational initiative planning, as well as reviews and develops proposed legislation.
* Key subject areas include federal contracting, immigration, border search, Title 10/32: DOD/civilian Interaction, FEMA statutes and state and local – federalism issues.
* Partners closely with the secretary of Homeland Security, the U.S. Coast Guard Office of the Judge Advocate General, Federal Law Enforcement Training Center Office of Legal Counsel, TSA Office of Legal Counsel, Customs and Border Protection Office of Chief Counsel, U.S. Citizenship and Immigrations Services Office of Chief Counsel and Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of the Principal Legal Advisor.
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | Depends on the policy priorities of the administration |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Ability to work smoothly with the DNI, across the intelligence community and with other government agencies.
* Experience working with or in Congress is beneficial
* Familiarity with or ability to manage a complex, highly secretive mission set
* Experience working in intelligence, foreign affairs or the military, either directly or in an oversight capacity
* Diplomatic skills and demeanor to work with foreign liaison services
* High degree of discretion
* Familiarity and fundamental understanding of emerging technologies
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| Competencies | * *Strategic Orientation*: Demonstrates complex thinking abilities, incorporating both analytical and conceptual abilities to manage and develop legal plans and strategies.
* *Results Orientation*: Demonstrated ability to be proactive, exercise independent judgment and manage multiple projects simultaneously. A strong work ethic and a track record of producing high quality work under deadline pressures.
* *Team Leadership*: Experience effectively managing geographically-dispersed staff of legal and administrative support professionals.
* *Collaboration & Influencing*: Proven track record of creating and managing relationships with peer executives inside the organization, outside counsel and third parties/institutions.
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Stevan Bunnell (2013-2017): Managing Partner at O’Melveny & Myers LLP; Federal Prosecutor for the U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division |
| Ivan Fong (2009-2012): Chief Legal Officer and Secretary at Cardinal Health; Senior Vice President and General Counsel at GE Vendor Financial Services; Deputy Associate Attorney General at U.S. Department of Justice |
| Gus Coldebella (2007-2009): Deputy General Counsel of DHS; Special Assistant District Attorney at the Middlesex District Attorney’s Office |
| Philip Perry (2005-2007): Acting Associate Attorney General at the Department of Justice; General Counsel of the Office of Management and Budget |

# Endnotes

This position description was created with the help of Egon Zehnder, a global executive search firm.

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)