



# Homeland Security

November 6, 2020

Sydnei Mayers  
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Mayers:

I wanted to take a moment to sincerely thank you for your help this summer in performing usability tests on [Coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov) and [HHS.gov/coronavirus](https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus). Your insights were extremely valuable not only when dealing with the current crisis but also longer term – your report has been circulated among the highest levels of government and is being used as part of the baseline requirements for a new “Digital Accelerator” program that the General Service Administration’s Technology Transformation Service is launching in the coming year. Your work is a credit to your university and to Dr. Brewer’s program - kudos for a job well done.

In this package, I’ve enclosed a challenge coin for the Department of Homeland Security. If you’re not familiar with what a challenge coin is... the origins of a challenge coin go back to the Roman Empire when soldiers were presented with coins to recognize special achievement. During World War I and World War II, challenge coins were used as a “bona fides” during personal meetings to help verify a person’s identity (especially by the military). There would be specific aspects that would be examined by both parties, which prevented infiltration by spies who would have to have advanced knowledge of the meeting details... as well as the correct coin.

On one side of the DHS coin, there is the seal of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which is described as such:

The seal is symbolic of the Department's mission – to prevent attacks and protect Americans – on the land, in the sea and in the air. In the center of the seal, a graphically styled American eagle appears in a circular blue field. The eagle's outstretched wings break through an inner red ring into an outer white ring that contains the words "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF" in the top half and "HOMELAND SECURITY" in the bottom half in a circular placement.

The eagle's wings break through the inner circle into the outer ring to suggest that the Department of Homeland Security will break through traditional bureaucracy and perform government functions differently. In the tradition of the Great Seal of the United States, the eagle's talon on the left holds an olive branch with 13 leaves and 13 seeds while the eagle's talon on the right grasps 13 arrows.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528



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Centered on the eagle's breast is a shield divided into three sections containing elements that represent the American homeland – air, land, and sea. The top element, a dark blue sky, contains 22 stars representing the original 22 entities that have come together to form the department. The left shield element contains white mountains behind a green plain underneath a light blue sky. The right shield element contains four wave shapes representing the oceans alternating light and dark blue separated by white lines.

In modern times, they're used by the military and government organizations to, again, recognize special achievement. (There's also a bit of a drinking thing associated with coins, but I trust you can find that info on Wikipedia yourself!)

Again, I can't thank you enough for your help this summer. Best wishes for a bright future – from our limited time working together, I know that you'll do great things!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew T. Harmon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew T. Harmon  
Director, Web Communications  
US Department of Homeland Security





PRESERVING OUR FREEDOMS, PROTECTING AMERICA... WE SECURE OUR PROMISELAND

EST. 2003

Preserve  
Protect  
Secure