

TOM RIDGE is the president and chief executive officer of Ridge Global LLC. As the company's chief executive, he leads a team of international specialists who help businesses and governments meet a range of needs, including risk management and global trade security, strategic business generation, technology integration, event security, crisis management, campus security and other issues that encompass a diverse portfolio.

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Tom Ridge became the first assistant to the President for homeland security and, on January 24, 2003, he became the first secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The creation of the country's fifteenth cabinet department marked the largest reorganization of government since the Truman administration and another call to service for the former soldier, congressman and governor of Pennsylvania.

During his tenure, Secretary Ridge worked with more than 180,000 employees from a combined 22 agencies to create an agency that facilitated the flow of people and goods, instituted layered security at air, land and seaports, developed a unified national response and recovery plan, protected critical infrastructure, integrated new technology and improved information sharing worldwide. He served as secretary of this historic and critical endeavor until February 1, 2005.

Before the events of September 11, Secretary Ridge was twice elected governor of Pennsylvania. He served as the state's forty-third governor from 1995 to 2001.

Born August 26, 1945, in Pittsburgh's Steel Valley, Secretary Ridge was raised in a working-class family in veterans' public housing in Erie. He earned a scholarship to Harvard, graduating with honors in 1967. After his first year at The Dickinson School of Law, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he served as an infantry staff sergeant in Vietnam, earning the Bronze Star for Valor, the Combat Infantry Badge and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. After returning to Pennsylvania and to Dickinson, he earned his law degree and was in private practice before becoming assistant district attorney in Erie County.

He was elected to Congress in 1982. He was one of the first Vietnam combat veterans elected to the U.S.

Throughout his public and private sector career, Secretary Ridge has received numerous honors, including the Woodrow Wilson Award, the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, the John F. Kennedy National Award, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the American Bar Association's John Marshall Award, the National Guard's Harry S. Truman Award, the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation's Conservationist of the Year Award, U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce's Good Neighbor Award, the American Cancer Society's National Medal of Honor, the Mister Rogers Award, the Champion of Public Television Award, the Intrepid Freedom Award and the Esperanza Leadership Award. Secretary Ridge has also been awarded honorary degrees and awards from many national and international academic institutions.