

From Texan Entrepreneur to Government Innovator

It's not every day the Homeland Security CIO offers you a job over Tex-Mex.

[Amanda Ziadeh](#)

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When Molly Cain was the executive director of startup accelerator Tech Wildcatters in Dallas, she met with members of the Homeland Security Department in Austin to discuss the state of entrepreneurship in Texas. But what began as a cross-sector meet and greet led to a career-altering relationship, all over a couple of Tex-Mex meals.

Cain is now the director of the Office of Venture & Innovation at DHS, and the guest of GovCast's second episode. But Cain wasn't always so gung-ho about joining government. In fact, when she first met with these DHS key players, the chief information officer at the time, Luke McCormack, asked Cain if she had ever

considered being a fed.

“I said, ‘of course not, you guys are so boring!’” she told [GovCast](#) hosts Camille Tuutti and Amanda Ziadeh. But their meeting went so well that McCormack flew back down to Austin with Mike Hermus, then-chief technology officer, to meet with Cain over another Tex-Mex meal. But this time, they also spent the day discussing tech startups, and Cain says McCormack and Hermus were able to see how she might do due diligence.

Cain was offered a job at DHS, and though she had never thought about joining government before, she said she embraced McCormack’s and his team’s mission.

“I had never met federal employees that were like them before,” Cain says, “and wanted to follow them to the ends of the Earth with that.” Ultimately, she loved their passion for wanting to innovate government.

But working in government doesn’t mean Cain keeps quiet on social media, or sets aside what she’s passionate about outside of innovation.

“There’s not a process written that you can’t have a healthy conversation,” Cain says. “LinkedIn has allowed for that . . . it’s just a little more public.”

She also touches on the lack of visible women in technology in and outside of government, and in departmental leadership teams.

“One of the best things about social media and business networking online is a lot of people think the same way, and these tools are enabling us to realize that we’re not alone,” Cain says, and that includes seeing photos of all-men panels at tech events, or “manels.”

“It’s inexcusable in 2018 that you can’t find a women in tech at any level, at any expertise,” Cain says. So, to change that culture in government, Cain says she only works for men who want to spend time with her in a working manner and who don’t see her gender as a handicap.

Listen to [episode 2 of GovCast](#) to hear more about why Cain no longer plans her next career moves, how she keeps a fresh outlook on government and technology by living outside of D.C., how she noticed her attention-deficit disorder was actually a gift once she entered the workforce, and what her office is working on next in DHS.

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