

THURSDAY FRIDAY MONDAY TUESDAY **TODAY**

Kevin Kish

*Department of Fair Employment and Housing
Sacramento*

At just 38 years old, Kish was appointed in December by Gov. Jerry Brown to head the Department of Fair Employment and Housing, the largest state civil rights agency in the country.

A former employee rights lawyer at Bet Tzedek in Los Angeles, Kish said the state's pro-worker and anti-discrimination body of laws partly persuaded him to join the public sector.

"We enforce laws that are more expansive than analogous federal laws or laws in other states," Kish said, putting the agency "in a vanguard position to define what effective civil rights work looks like."

DFEH has received criticism during the Brown administration from plaintiffs' lawyers who say the agency is slow to process claims and not doing enough with its investigative arm. Kish said his focus now is mostly internal - a "top-to-bottom review of our internal directives, templates, and procedures," plus making the department more accessible "to people with disabilities, people who don't speak English, and people who don't know we're here."

Kish gained notoriety at Bet Tzedek for his work on behalf of low-wage workers and immigrants. Right before exiting the nonprofit, Kish secured a state appellate court win for an undocumented 17-year-old in a case that held undocumented children have the same rights as other children who seek a guardian. *Israel R. v. The Superior Court of Los Angeles*, B260269 (Cal. App. 2nd Dist., Nov. 24, 2014).

Kish called the panel's ruling in the case "one of my proudest moments."

- MATTHEW BLAKE

