

## Contact

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(LinkedIn)

## Top Skills

Public Affairs

Strategic Communications

Media Relations

## Honors-Awards

40 Under 40 2021 - forward-thinking future of the PR industry

Out Leaders List 2023 - LGBTQIA+ experts in U.S. national security and foreign policy

# Justin Ángel Knighten

Director, FEMA Office of External Affairs | Biden-Harris Administration Appointee

Washington, District of Columbia, United States

## Summary

Justin Knighten is a crisis communications expert, strategist, storyteller and advocate for equity, human rights and solutions to address the climate crisis. With a career based on cross-sector and issue area experience, Justin is driven by navigating complex challenges through establishing innovative partnerships, leading teams and reimagining what's possible to achieve results.

As a senior official in Biden-Harris Administration, Justin serves as Director of FEMA's Office of External Affairs. Justin oversees all external affairs responses for federally declared disasters and is actively integrating accessible and culturally competent messaging strategies across the agency. He directs several teams within the office, including communications, disaster operations, public affairs, intergovernmental affairs, tribal affairs, congressional affairs, as well as the Ready Campaign, the nation's disaster preparedness public outreach and education campaign.

Previously, Justin held several appointed positions across the Gov. Newsom Administration. Most notably, Justin served as Co-Chair of Gov. Newsom's \$50 Million Listos California disaster preparedness campaign, a groundbreaking effort to build resilience among the state's most hard to reach and socially vulnerable populations. Justin designed a novel approach based on community organizing and voter engagement style tactics, behavioral change science, culturally appropriate messaging and outreach and grant funding to empower community-based organizations. As a result, millions of Californians became prepared for wildfire, earthquake, and floods. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the campaign shifted to also include public health emergencies as the state's primary effort to support populations most at risk.

Justin also served as senior vice president of a California-based public affairs firm. There he lead successful initiatives, including

campaigns for The California Endowment to boost enrollment in President Obama's Affordable Care Act, a renewable energy developer with large-scale wind and solar farm projects across the US and Mexico, and to enact policy that modernized K-12 school funding in California (LCFF), Gov. Brown's solution to increase equity for foster care youth, English learners and low income students.

He helped launch the Harvey Milk Foundation and served as their global media director. Justin began his career on the CalEPA legislative team which lead efforts to enact the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, the first-of-its-kind law to slow down climate change.

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## Experience

### FEMA

Director, Office of External Affairs

January 2021 - Present (2 years 8 months)

Washington, District of Columbia, United States

### Truman National Security Project

Truman National Security Fellow

December 2022 - Present (9 months)

Washington DC-Baltimore Area

### Office of California Governor Gavin Newsom

1 year 11 months

Co-chair of Listos California @ Cal OES

September 2019 - January 2021 (1 year 5 months)

Sacramento, California Area

### Director of Strategic Communications and External Affairs @ California Volunteers

March 2019 - September 2019 (7 months)

Sacramento, California

### Lucas Public Affairs

10 years 10 months

Senior Vice President

October 2018 - March 2019 (6 months)

Sacramento, California Area

Vice President

June 2008 - October 2018 (10 years 5 months)

Sacramento, California Area

Harvey Milk Foundation

Global Public Affairs & Media Director

January 2010 - March 2019 (9 years 3 months)

Equality California

Leadership Academy Fellow

April 2017 - December 2017 (9 months)

California

New Leaders Council

New Leaders Council Fellow

January 2010 - May 2010 (5 months)

Sacramento, California Area

Porter Novelli: Public Affairs

Account Coordinator

February 2008 - June 2008 (5 months)

California Environmental Protection Agency

Legislative Assistant

June 2005 - February 2008 (2 years 9 months)

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## Education

CSU Sacramento

BA, Public Relations; minor in Political Science · (August 2003 - December 2007)

MIT Sloan School of Management

Graduate Certificate, Business Process Design for Strategic Management · (December 2017 - February 2018)

Leiden University

Graduate Certificate, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) in  
International Law, Human Rights · (July 2019 - August 2019)

MIT Sloan School of Management

Graduate Certificate, LINK20@MIT – Leadership in the Digital  
Age · (September 2020 - September 2020)