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Contact:

jennifer@afterthefireusa.org

www.afterthefireusa.org

PRESS RELEASE

After the Fire USA Urges Return to Survivor-Centered Recovery Following Rep. Kevin Kiley's Letter

Los Angeles, CA | July 28, 2025 — After the Fire USA (ATF USA), the nation's only nonprofit dedicated solely to megafire recovery, today issued a statement reaffirming its commitment to disaster-impacted communities following public criticism from Representative Kevin Kiley.

Rep. Kiley's recent letter to the Department of Justice raised concerns about organizations receiving wildfire recovery funds, including those supporting the ongoing recovery from the January 2025 fires in Los Angeles. While transparency and oversight are essential, ATF USA expressed concern that political rhetoric risks undermining community trust in the very systems meant to help survivors.

"We've communicated directly with Rep. Kiley's office on multiple occasions over the years," said Jennifer Gray Thompson, CEO of After the Fire USA. "His Chief of Staff once encouraged us to 'keep our heads down and keep up the good work.' We took that to heart. That's what made his recent remarks so disappointing."¹

ATF USA has been a visible, collaborative force in megafire recovery for nearly a decade, including recent efforts in Rep. Kiley's district, such as post-Dixie Fire recovery support in Plumas County. In Los Angeles, the organization has provided:

- Six deployments of disaster recovery experts and survivor-leaders
- Development of two grassroots-led block captain networks
- Over 30 briefings on mental health, FEMA/SBA navigation, insurance, and recovery financing
- More than 1,000 direct engagements with local survivors, public servants, clergy, and community leaders

Community groups have voiced strong support for ATF USA's efforts. Team Palisades, a survivor-led coalition, credited the nonprofit with catalyzing their entire recovery model.

"They were the first real lifeline we received," said Tony Hocking and Darragh Danton. "Their ongoing presence, support, and peer-to-peer guidance have helped us build a grassroots recovery network that now connects hundreds of neighbors".

ATF USA's national impact includes helping secure billions in federal relief through bipartisan legislation like H.R. 5863—co-sponsored by Rep. Kiley—and direct service to over two million people in fire-impacted communities across four states.

"Fire doesn't ask who you voted for. And neither do we," Thompson said. "We walk into disaster zones, not echo chambers. Our only allegiance is to survivors."

The organization invited Rep. Kiley—and all public officials—to refocus on what truly matters.

"We welcome any opportunity to clarify our work and walk the recovery road together," added Thompson. "Let's not allow political narratives to obscure the real story: communities rebuilding with courage, strength, and very little margin for distraction." Let's move forward together as Americans focused on recovery from this devastating disaster.