

## CEO

Jennifer Gray Thompson, MPA

## Executive Board

### Board President

Judy Coffey RN, Senior  
Consultant, Leap Solutions;  
Former Senior Vice President &  
Area Manager, Kaiser  
Permanente

Marko Bey  
Executive Director & Co-  
Founder  
Lomakatsi Restoration Project

Lisa Micheli, Ph.D.  
President & CEO,  
Pepperwood Preserve

## Emeritus Board

Michael Mondavi  
Founder & Coach,  
Folio Fine Wine Partners

Lisa Carreño  
Executive Director,  
United Way Wine Country

Sonu Chandi,  
Founder & President,  
Chandi Hospitality Group

Jesse Katz  
Founder/Winemaker,  
Devil Proof Vineyards

Cynthia Murray,  
President & CEO,  
North Bay Leadership Council

Tara Sharp  
Marketing Officer,  
Google

Henry Hansel  
President,  
Hansel Auto Group

Larry Florin  
CEO & President,  
Burbank Housing

Jack Buckhorn  
Executive Director,  
North Bay Labor Council

Chisato Fukuda Calvert  
Interim Director  
Open AQ

Jake Klobberdanz  
CEO & Founder, ONEHOPE



July 25, 2025

**The Honorable Kevin Kiley**  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

## Re: Response to FireAid Letter and Mischaracterization of After the Fire USA

Dear Representative Kiley,

I am writing on behalf of After the Fire USA, in my role as Founder and CEO, to address your recent letter to the Department of Justice concerning FireAid and the nonprofits that received funding to support recovery from the devastating January 2025 wildfires in Los Angeles.

While I appreciate and share your commitment to protecting donor intent and public trust, your letter contains critical inaccuracies that risk undermining survivor trust and the very recovery efforts your constituents and others depend upon.

Most troublingly, your remarks dismiss the leadership, expertise, and lived experience that our team and partners bring to traumatized communities. To date, no evidence has emerged of wrongdoing, and in our experience, FireAid has acted with integrity and humility—often to the point of invisibility. If I have any criticism, it's that they didn't ask for any credit, which led to an unfortunate lack of awareness of their deep impact. Their discretion was rooted in respect for survivors, not the intent to deceive.

Let me be clear: After the Fire USA did receive a FireAid grant to provide strategic, survivor-centered recovery services following the Los Angeles fires. We are proud of the work those funds enabled. A full report on our FireAid-supported services is attached.

After the Fire USA is the only nonprofit in the nation solely dedicated to megafire recovery. We are also the leading national advocate for fire survivors and wildfire recovery policy. In 2022, I was honored to be recognized by *Forbes* as one of the 50 over 50 most impactful women in America for my work in this field. That recognition, however, pales in comparison to the gratitude we've received from survivors themselves — because that is who we serve first, last, and always.

As we have done in virtually every megafire community in the United States, we provided strategic coaching, systems navigation, stakeholder convening, and

19201 SONOMA HWY #224 SONOMA, CA 95476 | [www.afterthefireusa.org](http://www.afterthefireusa.org)

After the Fire USA is an initiative of Rebuild Northbay Foundation, a registered nonprofit (501c3 & 501c4). We help communities navigate the Era of Megafires. We advocate and collaborate with public officials (regional, state and federal), private sector, nonprofit community to support community led and designed recovery.

EIN/TAX ID: 82-3266893



technical support to help communities access resources, build long-term recovery systems, and ultimately heal. Our motto is simple: no one goes it alone.

You referenced that we are based in Sonoma County, implying a disconnect from Los Angeles. That misunderstands both our work and our origin story. We are headquartered in Sonoma because that's where this modern megafire crisis began. I watched my hometown burn from all sides in 2017, losing 43 lives and more than 8,900 structures across four counties. In those terrifying days, I witnessed a profound resilience and community strength that would go on to shape everything we do.

Unfortunately, we quickly discovered that our systems were unprepared for megafire disasters of this magnitude. That realization forged a promise: no community would ever walk this path alone again.

From that promise, After the Fire USA was born.

Since then, I've spoken at FEMA, HUD, SBA, testified before the U.S. Senate, and presented at institutions including MIT and UNC. I've worked across party lines to help pass landmark federal legislation, including H.R. 5863, which delivered essential tax relief for survivors. We've supported recovery efforts in your own district and others. I've communicated directly with your office and staff regarding urgent needs in Plumas County post-Dixie Fire.

Here's a snapshot of the megafires where After the Fire USA has supported recovery:

#### **California:**

- 2017 North Bay Fires – Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Mendocino Counties
- 2018 Camp Fire – Butte County
- 2018 Woolsey Fire – Los Angeles County
- 2019 Kincade and Walbridge Fires – Sonoma County
- 2020 Glass (Sonoma County) and CZU Lightning Complex Fires (Santa Cruz)
- 2021 Cache (Lake County) and Dixie Fires (Plumas County)
- 2025 Los Angeles Fires – Palisades and Eaton Fires

#### **Oregon, Colorado, Hawaii:**

- 2020 Alameda, Santiam Canyon, McKenzie Fires
- 2021 Marshall Fire – Boulder County
- 2023 Maui Fires – Lahaina and Kula

19201 SONOMA HWY #224, SONOMA, CA 95476 | [www.afterthefireusa.org](http://www.afterthefireusa.org)

After the Fire USA is an initiative of Rebuild Northbay Foundation, a registered nonprofit (501c3 & 501c4). We help communities navigate wildfires across the American West. We collaborate with public officials (regional, state and federal), private sector, nonprofit community, and support community led and designed recovery.

EIN/TAX ID: 82-3266893



In Los Angeles, we responded to community requests with:

- Six delegations of expert practitioners and survivor-leaders
- Two block captain systems, co-designed with local leaders
- 30+ public and private webinars on mental health, FEMA/SBA processes, insurance, recovery financing, and storytelling
- Strategic advising for clergy, civil servants, and local organizers
- Briefings with funders for accessible and innovative resource deployment
- Policy memos, technical working groups, and disaster finance translation for public use
- Over 1,000 meetings with stakeholders, survivors, and local leaders—virtually and in-person—to keep the work moving forward between site visits

We continue to be on the ground in Los Angeles, bringing delegations monthly and supporting communities virtually the rest of the time. Recovery is not a moment; it is a movement—and we show up for it.

We are proud to be of service to the people of Los Angeles. Our work is guided by deeply experienced leaders like Reva Feldman (Woolsey Fire, 2018) and Valerie Brown (Witch Creek Fire, 2007), with support from committed staff like Natalie Minuzzo. This is not just our work. It's our mission.

Let me also directly address the notion that we are politically motivated. Our D.C. work is bipartisan, consistent, and deeply rooted in the needs of survivors. I've met with offices on both sides of the aisle, including yours, to advocate for fair and trauma-informed recovery. Notably, we supported tax relief efforts alongside Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-Butte), Rep. Mike Thompson (D-Napa), and yourself.

Megafire doesn't care about party lines, and neither do we. We walk into disaster zones as fellow Americans. We offer technical expertise, yes—but also hope and humanity. Nonpartisanship is not neutrality. It's the basis of durable partnership.

Your office has seen our tireless efforts and legislative wins. I've exchanged several emails with your Chief of Staff, Bob Holste, who once told me:

“Keep your head down, don't get discouraged and keep pushing. [...] Keep up the good work and God speed.”

That message meant a great deal to me. Which is why your public attack came as a disappointment.

My team will be in Greenville this week, revisiting recovery work in the Dixie, Camp, and CZU fire zones. While I won't be there personally this time, I've made the trip many times before. I know those roads. I

19201 SONOMA HWY #224, SONOMA, CA 95476 | [www.afterthefireusa.org](http://www.afterthefireusa.org)

After the Fire USA is an initiative of Rebuild Northbay Foundation, a registered nonprofit (501c3 & 501c4). We help communities navigate wildfires across the American West. We collaborate with public officials (regional, state and federal), private sector, nonprofit community, and support community led and designed recovery.

EIN/TAX ID: 82-3266893

# AFTER THE FIRE

RECOVER. REBUILD. REIMAGINE.™

know the people. There's still a crack in my truck's windshield and a nail in my back tire from one of those trips.

I invite you to join them. Walk the roads of a town your constituents are rebuilding with grit and grace. Revisit what survivor-led recovery looks like on the ground. Let's talk story at The Spot, marvel at Ken Donnell's rebuilds, or meet with Sierra Institute. Let's refocus on what really matters.

In closing, I offer a quote from Nick Cave that has stayed with me:

"Cynicism is not a neutral position—and although it asks almost nothing of us, it is highly infectious and unbelievably destructive. [...] Hopefulness is not a neutral position either. It is adversarial. It is the warrior emotion that can lay waste to cynicism."

We work in devastation. We show up with skill, heart, and humility. We choose hope. And we'll continue to walk that path with every fire survivor who needs us.

Let's move forward with clarity and shared purpose. Fire survivors deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Gray Thompson, MPA  
Founder & CEO

Attachments: FireAid LA Report

Appendix: Media References

# AFTER THE FIRE

RECOVER. REBUILD. REIMAGINE.™

## SUPPORTING MATERIALS

- *After the Fire USA LA Community Recovery Webinars Playlist* - <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGiVHREZs3hTBXR3-TR3K6lGyO2ijQ2zh&feature=shared>
- *Residents harden homes after wildfires | On Your Side KCAL News*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV7ZLqnB\\_po](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV7ZLqnB_po)
- *American Friends of Magen David Adom - Experts offer tips on resilience from Israel to Los Angeles in AFMDA* (April 15, 2025) - <https://afmda.org/news/resilience-webinar/>
- *Ethos Giving - Social Impact Power Chat with Jennifer Gray Thompson of After the Fire USA* (April 29, 2025) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-XmorT27As>
- *Eaton Fire Survivors Network - Altadena's Future Recovery* (April 10, 2025) - <https://www.youtube.com/@EFSurvivorsNetwork>
- *Three Homeless Guys: The Palisades Fire by Joel Pollak Podcast*
  - *After The Fire: THG hosts Jennifer Gray Thompson* (March 10, 2025) - <https://rss.com/podcasts/three-homeless-guys-the-palisades-fire/1935228/>
  - *Insurance Claims: Valerie Brown Exposes the Post-Fire Insurance Maze* - [https://youtu.be/N5CYr\\_ggga4?feature=shared](https://youtu.be/N5CYr_ggga4?feature=shared)
- Also, please see our LinkedIn profile for more photos and videos - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/afterthefireusa/>

### - Media coverage or press releases

- January 8, 2025, *'A Hellscape in All Directions': The Devastating Fires That Ignited Crisis and Chaos in L.A.*, The Wall Street Journal
  - <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/fierce-winds-unrelenting-flames-and-rushed-evacuations-the-night-wildfires-engulfed-los-angeles-3dba318c>
- January 8, 2025, *Sonoma County firefighters and aid workers rally to help Los Angeles in its time of need*, Petaluma Argus-Courier
  - <https://www.petaluma360.com/article/news/sonoma-county-firefighters-aid-workers-los-angeles-fires/>
- January 9, 2025, *Bay Area agency works to help Southern California fire victims recover*, NBC Bay Area
  - <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/california/california-wildfires/bay-area-agency-help-fire-victims/3756359/>
- January 11, 2025, *The Last House Standing*, The New York Times
  - <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/11/realestate/california-wildfires-homes.html>

19201 SONOMA HWY #224, SONOMA, CA 95476 | [www.afterthefireusa.org](http://www.afterthefireusa.org)

After the Fire USA is an initiative of Rebuild Northbay Foundation, a registered nonprofit (501c3 & 501c4). We help communities navigate wildfires across the American West. We collaborate with public officials (regional, state and federal), private sector, nonprofit community, and support community led and designed recovery.

EIN/TAX ID: 82-3266893

# AFTER THE FIRE

RECOVER. REBUILD. REIMAGINE.™

- January 12, 2025, *Gov. Newsom lifts environmental requirements for those rebuilding from LA fires*, NBC Bay Area
  - <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/california/california-wildfires/newsom-lifts-environmental-requirements-rebuilding-la-fires/3758745/>
- January 14, 2025, *How some larger North Bay organizations are helping with Los Angeles wildfire recovery*, The Press Democrat
  - <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/north-bay/la-fire-recovery-donations/>
- January 15, 2025, *LA Wildfire Resources: Megafire Recovery Experts in Conversation with Evan Spiegel*, Snapchat
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sxwLvz08k>
- January 15, 2025, *A long road to rebuilding and fights over government funding await L.A. fire victims*, NBC News
  - <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/long-road-rebuilding-fights-government-funding-await-l-fire-victims-rcna187478>
- January 15, 2025, *Los Angeles' Destruction Was Fueled by Bad Policy—and Bad Incentives*, The Dispatch
  - <https://thedispatch.com/newsletter/capitolism/los-angeles-destruction-was-fueled-by-bad-policy-and-bad-incentives/>
- January 16, 2025, *People whose homes were spared in L.A. wildfires contend with survivor's guilt*, NBC News
  - <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/people-whose-homes-spared-l-wildfires-contend-survivors-guilt-rcna187668>
- January 17, 2025, *What happens when the California fires go out? More gentrification*, Vox
  - <https://www.vox.com/policy/395261/california-wildfires-los-angeles-gentrification-displacement>
- January 17, 2025, *North Bay construction-worker shortage eyed for \$2M push to recruit young adults*, North Bay Business Journal
  - <https://www.northbaybusinessjournal.com/article/industry-news/north-bay-construction-worker-shortage-eyed-for-2m-push-to-recruit-young-a/>
- January 18, 2025, *'Evacuation fatigue' sets in for Southern Californians yet to return home after wildfires*, CNN US
  - <https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/18/us/los-angeles-wildfires-evacuees-return/index.html>
- January 21, 2025, *Advice on Recovering from a Wildfire, From Californians Who've Been There*, KQED Forum

19201 SONOMA HWY #224, SONOMA, CA 95476 | [www.afterthefireusa.org](http://www.afterthefireusa.org)

After the Fire USA is an initiative of Rebuild Northbay Foundation, a registered nonprofit (501c3 & 501c4). We help communities navigate wildfires across the American West. We collaborate with public officials (regional, state and federal), private sector, nonprofit community, and support community led and designed recovery.

EIN/TAX ID: 82-3266893

# AFTER THE FIRE

RECOVER. REBUILD. REIMAGINE.™

- <https://www.kqed.org/forum/2010101908557/advice-on-recovering-from-a-wildfire-from-californians-whove-been-there>
- January 22, 2025, *Wildfires and Mental Health: Community First, Then Therapy*, WebMD
  - <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/news/20250122/wildfires-and-mental-health-community-first-then-therapy>
- January 23, 2025, *How policymakers can help the L.A. wildfire recovery*, USC Price School
  - <https://priceschool.usc.edu/news/la-wildfire-recovery-policy-government-aid/>
- January 24, 2025, *Los Angelenos Have a Long Road to Recovery Ahead of Them*, Heatmap News
  - <https://heatmap.news/climate/los-angeles-fires-rebuilding>
- January 31, 2025, *Long-awaited tax relief for fire victims clears major hurdle with House vote*, The Press Democrat
  - <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/long-awaited-tax-relief-for-fire-victims-clears-major-hurdle-with-u-s-hous/>
- February 3, 2025, *PO Boxes, Endless Lists and Self-Compassion: How to Recover From Losing a Home to a Wildfire*, KQED
  - <https://www.kqed.org/news/12025125/advice-to-those-recovering-from-wildfire-from-northern-californians-whove-been-there>
- February 8, 2025, *Insurance commissioner: Wildfire victims should be paid without itemizing lost contents*, Los Angeles Times
  - <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-02-08/insurance-commissioner-wildfire-possession-losses>
- February 9, 2025, *Donations topped \$650 million, and the question looms: How to best use it for fire recovery?*, Los Angeles Times
  - <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-02-09/with-fire-relief-donations-topping-650-million-charities-strategize-their-role-in-recovery>
- February 13, 2025, *What Maui's slow recovery means for L.A. — and the rest of the U.S.*, The Washington Post
  - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2025/02/13/maui-fires-los-angeles-recovery/>

19201 SONOMA HWY #224, SONOMA, CA 95476 | [www.afterthefireusa.org](http://www.afterthefireusa.org)

After the Fire USA is an initiative of Rebuild Northbay Foundation, a registered nonprofit (501c3 & 501c4). We help communities navigate wildfires across the American West. We collaborate with public officials (regional, state and federal), private sector, nonprofit community, and support community led and designed recovery.

EIN/TAX ID: 82-3266893