



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 151

Resolution calling upon the City University of New York (CUNY) to incorporate Diwali as an observed university holiday throughout the CUNY system.

By Council Member Dromm

Whereas, Diwali, a five-day festival, is one of the most important holidays on the Hindu calendar and is referred to as the “festival of lights”; and

Whereas, Diwali is celebrated on the 15th day of the Hindu month of Kartik, which occurs in either October or November; and

Whereas, Diwali generally celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance; and

Whereas, The Diwali celebration varies throughout India by geographical region and religion; and

Whereas, Diwali is observed by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and some Buddhists; and

Whereas, According to the United States Census Bureau’s latest American Religious Identification Survey in 2008, there were 582,000 Hindus, 78,000 Sikhs, and 1,189,000 Buddhists in the United States; and

Whereas, According to the Census Bureau’s 2016 American Community Survey, there were 227,825 New York City residents who identified themselves as Asian Indian, of which many are adherents of Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, or Buddhism; and

Whereas, According to The Hindu American Foundation (HAF), a national non-profit advocacy organization for the Hindu American community, Diwali is celebrated by over two million people in the United States alone and by one billion people worldwide; and

Whereas, Other countries that celebrate Diwali include Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Fiji, Guyana, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar (or Burma), Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Surinam, Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom; and

Whereas, Diwali was first celebrated in the White House under President George W. Bush in 2003 following a long-standing demand by the Indian American community and continues to be recognized under President Obama's Administration; and

Whereas, In 2007, the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution recognizing the religious and historical significance of Diwali, and the United States Senate passed similar resolutions in 2011 and 2013; and

Whereas, Furthermore, the first-ever Congressional Diwali celebration was held in 2013; and

Whereas, In New York City, alternate side parking rules are suspended on this holiday; and

Whereas, Diwali, however, is not observed as a university holiday at The City University of New York (CUNY); and

Whereas, CUNY campuses are closed on a number of religious holidays, including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and Passover; and

Whereas, CUNY's undergraduate student body reflects the diversity of New York City, which is comprised of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds from 216 countries, including several countries that celebrate Diwali; and

Whereas, CUNY prides itself in its continuing development of programs and policies designed to meet the academic and social needs of its diverse student body population, and therefore, should incorporate Diwali into the University's academic calendar; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the City University of New York (CUNY) to incorporate Diwali as an observed university holiday throughout the CUNY system.

TC  
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1/4/18