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**AHC NEW YORK OBSERVES DIWALI 2018;  
HOSTS PRESS CONFERENCE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF BILL  
TO ESTABLISH DIWALI AS AN OFFICIAL PUBLIC HOLIDAY**



**Queens NY, November 4, 2018** - Vincent Bruno, New York Chapter, American Hindu Coalition (AHC) and other AHC members joined Hindu, Sikh, and Jain Americans outside the *Divya Jyotish* temple in Jamaica, Queens today for a press conference to garner public support for the passage of **Senate Bill S5304** and **Assembly Bill A4331**, which would establish Diwali as an official public holiday in New York.

Prominent New York State and New York City public officials addressed the crowd in observance of Diwali 2018, including State Senator Leroy Comrie, Assembly Member David Weprin, Council members Donnavan Richard, Barry Grodenchick, Paul Vallone, Costa Constantinides, and Democratic District leaders, Dr. Neeta Jain, and Richard David. AHC has raised public awareness of Diwali observances in America, held every year in late October or November, during the gathering darkness of the coming winter months. Diwali represents the triumph of light over dark and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali celebration is marked by the lighting of homes, streets, and stores with millions of lights and candles. This is the time of year that Hindu, Sikh, and Jain families gather in each other's homes with presents and sweet treats.





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**Vincent Bruno, AMERICAN HINDU COALITION (New York):** “AHC is excited to support the passage of S.5304 and A.4331. In New York City, Diwali is a recognized holiday and every year alternate-side parking rules are suspended. NYC Councilman Dromm introduced a resolution on July 24th, 2016 urging the Department of Education to approve the proposal to make Diwali an official school holiday.”

**Senator Leroy Comrie (Jamaica):** “It is hard to overstate the many ways by which the Hindu, Jain, and Sikh communities contribute to our State. I am proud to sponsor S.2401, which would fully declare Diwali a public holiday in New York State, a designation which is wholly deserved by our fellow New Yorkers who observe the holiday. I am fully committed to pushing for speedy passage of this bill in the coming legislative session.”

**Assembly Member David I. Weprin (Hollis):** "I'm happy to be a co-prime sponsor of the legislation to recognize Diwali as a public school holiday in the assembly. I'm going to continue to fight to get the NYC Department of Education to recognize Diwali so no student will have to choose between celebrating with their family or their school obligations.”

**Council Member Costa Constantinides, (Astoria):** I want to wish good health to my Hindu brothers and sisters here in Queens — as well as around the world — as they celebrate Diwali this week. This is a time to reflect, pray for prosperity in the year to come, and come together with one’s family. It should also remind us to respect all religions equally. I fully support making Diwali a New York City school holiday to ensure all children who celebrate the festival of lights do not have to choose between their religious observances and missing a day of school.”

**Council Member Paul Vallone (Bayside):** “Wishing a very happy Diwali to all those who celebrate the holiday! May the festival of lights brighten your lives with peace, prosperity, health and happiness! Celebrating the light outshining the darkness during these troubling times is of the utmost importance. As one of the most widely celebrated holidays in the city's Hindu, Jain and Sikh communities, I will fight to have the City give the holiday its proper recognition by establishing it as an official school holiday! Today's rally organized by the New American Voters Association shows the support the movement has and by standing together, we will achieve this goal!"

**Council Member Barry Grodenchik (Bellerose):** "It is long past time that Diwali be recognized as an official New York City public school holiday. The 300,000 New Yorkers who celebrate Diwali should be able to celebrate it with their entire families without being forced to forgo sending their children to school."

**Democratic District Leader Richard David:** “Hinduism is global from the Caribbean to South Asia, and Diwali is among the most important holidays in this religion. Right here in New York City, with a large Hindu population, it’s time to recognize Diwali as a public school holiday. We must work together now to bring communities like these out of the shadows, increase tolerance and promote fairness.”

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