



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy Cooney

## Senator Cooney Hosts First Ever Diwali Celebration in Rochester

JEREMY COONEY November 16, 2023

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**SENATOR COONEY HOSTS FIRST EVER DIWALI CELEBRATION IN ROCHESTER**

*Senator Cooney is the first and only South Asian state-elected official outside of NYC*

(ROCHESTER, NY) - Tonight, Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester), hosted the first ever Diwali celebration held by an elected official in the City of Rochester. Diwali, also known as the 'Festival of Lights,' is a five day festival that marks the start of the Hindu new year and holds significant religious and cultural value.

The event was co-hosted by the Dogra Art Foundation and included cultural performances by local artists, a blessing done by Hindu Priest Shri Lakshmi Puram Govind Bhattar, and a proclamation presented by Sibu Nair, Deputy Director for Asian Affairs for Governor Hochul.

As the first Indian to be elected to NYS office from Upstate New York, this event holds particular significance to Senator Cooney. He and others lit the diya to represent the spiritual victory of light over darkness.

As an Indian-American, Senator Cooney has been a champion for the AAPI community, as it is the fastest growing minority group in New York State.

This event was free and open to the public with Indian refreshments provided by local restaurants.

#### **NYS Senator Jeremy Cooney**

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*Happy Diwali! It has been an honor to host this cultural event, bringing a part of my heritage to Rochester in a big way. Diwali is celebrated with lighting lamps (“diyas”), fireworks, and other cultural and religious festivities—it’s one of the most important Hindu festivals. Seeing the huge turnout for this first-time event speaks to the inclusive nature of our Rochester community.”*

#### **Dr. Vikram Dogra, Founder, Dogra Art Foundation**

"Today marks a historic day for the Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities. Diwali, The Festival of Lights, illuminated Senator Jeremy Cooney's office for the first time in Monroe County. This momentous event celebrates our unity and cultural diversity, signifying a major step towards greater recognition in New York. Together, we pave the way for a more inclusive

and harmonious future and thank Senator Cooney for his support."

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