



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

## Assemblymember Kim, Senator Squadron, Electeds Urge Mayor to Add Lunar New Year as School Holiday

DANIEL L. SQUADRON March 9, 2015

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### **18 Lawmakers Sign Letter Applauding Eid Al-Adha and Eid Al-Fitr Holiday, Urge Lunar New Year to be Included**

#### **Letter Cites Mayor's Pledge and New Law**

Flushing, Queens – Assemblymember Ron Kim and State Senator Daniel Squadron joined colleagues across New York City in urging Mayor de Blasio to add Lunar New Year as a school holiday.

Mayor de Blasio announced last week that New York City public schools have added Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr to the 2015-16 calendar as school holidays. Before his election and after taking office, the Mayor had publicly pledged that he would add Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr as well as Lunar New Year as holidays to the school calendar.

Kim and Squadron spearheaded a letter signed by 18 elected officials applauding the Mayor's decision to add the two Muslim holidays, and asking that Lunar New Year also be included as previously pledged. The New York Times have also chimed in on this issue, stating that "The next new day off should be the Lunar New Year" in [Saturday's editorial](#).

**Assemblymember Ron Kim** said, "I join my colleagues at all levels of government to encourage the Mayor to keep his word in recognizing Lunar New Year as an American holiday in our schools. For far too long, Asian American kids, including myself, grew up in this city feeling marginalized and 'un-American' for celebrating their culture. It is really amazing that schools will be recognizing these important Muslim holidays so that our Muslim students won't have to feel the way many of our Asian students do. I hope that the Mayor will also recognize the importance of Lunar New Year to a huge percentage of our students and their families. Acknowledging some cultures but not others, the Mayor is playing a dangerous game by invalidating and further marginalizing ethnic communities. Let's use this chance to celebrate our diversity, not fuel deeper divides in our city."

"The Mayor's pledge of a Lunar New Year school holiday is so important to enact for the coming school year," said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. "Absentee rates are as high as 80% on Lunar New Year in certain schools in my district and across the city. Acting on the Mayor's pledge is critical so that students no longer have to choose between their most important cultural holiday and missing class, and to acknowledge the city's ongoing change. It's great news that public schools will be closed on Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and it's essential that Lunar New Year have the same result."

In addition to Assemblymember Kim and State Senator Squadron, the letter was signed by Congressmembers Carolyn Maloney, Grace Meng (who originally sponsored the legislation when she was a member of the NYS Assembly) and Nydia Velázquez; Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams and Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer; State Senators Martin Golden and Toby Ann Stavisky; Assemblymembers Edward Braunstein, Michael DenDekker, Francisco Moya, Dan Quart, Nily Rozic, Sheldon Silver and Michaelle Solages; and City Councilmembers Margaret Chin and Peter Koo.

Asian-American students comprise approximately 15 percent of all public school students in New York City. Lunar New Year is the most important cultural celebration on the Asian calendar. Currently, students who celebrate the Lunar New Year holiday receive an “excused” absence, meaning they miss a full day of classes and have the absence marked on their record. In 2014, Kim and Squadron passed legislation requiring the city Department of Education (DOE) consider closing schools if a holiday is likely to result in “a considerable proportion” of students being absent.

Please find the letter attached.