

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press release
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White house celebrates Buddhist Vesak with lighting of candles for the first time in American History

For the first time in US history, the celebration of the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha (Vesak), was held in the White House today. In honor of Vesak, [an official statement from the White House](#) has been announced by our President Biden:

"Jill and I extend our warmest wishes to Buddhists in the United States and around the world as they celebrate Vesak, a day honoring the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha. The ceremonial lighting of a lamp, the symbol of this holiday that has been celebrated for over 2,500 years, reminds us of Buddhism's teachings of compassion, humility, and selflessness that endure today. On this day, we also commemorate the many contributions of Buddhists in America who enrich our communities and our country as we all work together toward brighter days ahead."

We are pleased the White House has celebrated Vesak for the first time ever with the Second Gentleman, Mr Douglas Emhoff, lighting a candle in the White House in the presence of three Venerables representing Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions.

The event was coordinated by Wangmo Dixey, President of the [International Buddhist Association of America](#) through the good offices of Mr Shekar Narasimhan, President of the [Dharma Into Action Foundation](#). Lamps were lit and prayers offered by the Most Venerable Uparatana (Sri Lankan/American) on behalf of the Theravada tradition; Rev. Marvin Harada (Japanese/ American) on behalf of the Mahayana tradition and Venerable Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche (Tibetan/American) on behalf of the Vajrayana tradition.

Mrs Dixey said; *"it is wonderful that prayers were offered from all three great traditions of Buddhist practice here, at the heart of American democracy. It is so auspicious that this should happen on this day of celebration of the life and teachings of the Buddha. May the prayers we offer today bring peace and healing to all peoples, particularly to our brothers and sisters in India, the heartland of the Dharma, and may the light that radiates from here, the White House of America, bring wisdom and harmony to the whole world. We are lighting a million lamps today to honor this historical moment in our Buddhist history in America. "*

For more information, please contact Wangmo Dixey at 510 847 2966 at wdixey@dharma-college.com or Stefan Kuhn at 970-376-4204.