



Steven G. Gey

April 6, 1956 - June 9, 2011

Steven G. Gey, a nationally recognized scholar of constitutional law and longtime champion of civil liberties, died late Thursday night at his home in Tallahassee after a nearly five-year struggle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 55.

At his death, Professor Gey was the David & Deborah Fonvielle and Donald & Janet Hinkle Professor of Law at the Florida State University College of Law. Gey joined the FSU faculty in 1985 and taught as well as wrote in the field of constitutional law. His scholarship focused on freedom of speech and government treatment of religion under the First Amendment. Although the symptoms of Professor Gey's illness appeared in the spring of 2006, he taught his regular schedule of classes through the spring of 2008, and he continued writing articles, revising books, advising students, and conferring with colleagues until shortly before his death. His scholarly works include the casebook *Religion and the State* and numerous articles in journals associated with Columbia University, New York University, and the Universities of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois, among others. Professor Gey frequently served as pro bono publico counsel in cases involving political and civil rights in courts at every level of the state and federal judiciaries, often in conjunction with the ACLU and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. He strenuously defended the freedom of expression of clients all along the political spectrum; as a First Amendment absolutist in the mold of Justice Hugo Black, he opposed limits on expression from both the

left and the right. His principal clients were schools and school districts and defendants in capital cases. Professor Gey received the Association of the Bar of the City of New York's Thurgood Marshall Award for pro bono representation of death row inmates, and the National Center for Science Education awarded him the Friends of Darwin Award. ABC News consulted him as a constitutional law expert during the contested 2000 Presidential election, and Peter Jennings interviewed him several times on the Nightly News. The French Republic later invited him to Paris to analyze its restrictions on the wearing of religious paraphernalia in the Republic's schools.

Professor Gey was perennially one of the most popular and respected teachers on the FSU law faculty. The student body voted him Professor of the Year many times, and his colleagues at FSU twice selected him for a University Teaching Award. As one token of his stature among students, he was invariably chosen by the graduating class to serve as one of three faculty hooders at the commencement ceremony. Over the course of his twenty-six year academic career, Professor Gey also chaired every significant faculty committee at the FSU College of Law and served in the FSU Senate and on numerous university committees. He also served as faculty advisor to the FSU chapters of the ACLU and the American Constitutional Society and to the FSU Law Review. When his illness necessitated his resignation from that last post, the Law Review published in his honor a special issue that included tributes by faculty and professional colleagues and articles by other leading scholars in constitutional law.

Before joining the FSU law faculty, Professor Gey practiced with the Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison law firm in New York City. He practiced in the corporate law section, and his pro bono clients were principally death row inmates. He received his law degree with honors in 1982 from the Columbia Law School, where he was an articles editor of the law review, and his Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in 1978 from Eckerd College, where he majored in philosophy. He attended the public schools of Pensacola, Florida, and was the son of Annelle and Walter Gey.

Professor Gey is survived by his wife of 29 years, Irene Trakas; his father, Walter Gey; his sister Cindy, and three nieces and one nephew. He will be buried in Tallahassee after a private funeral. In addition, his colleagues at the FSU College of Law will announce on the College's website a public ceremony to be held in his honor. The family asks that, in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to the Gey Endowment for Civil Liberties. Contributions may be made online at <https://one.fsu.edu/community/SSLPage.aspx?pid=815> or sent to FSU College of Law – Gey Endowment for Civil Liberties.