

The article provides a legal-historical account of *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, 385 U.S. 589 (1967), the case in which a Supreme Court majority first recognized academic freedom as “special concern of the First Amendment.” The ruling emerges as the culmination of a process in which educators on the public payroll fought for First Amendment protections both for their own profession and for all public employees. This analysis has implications not only for our understanding of the case’s historical context, but also for the nature of academic freedom as a First Amendment right.