

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA, HAMMOND DIVISION

D. A. Shepardson v. Frank J. Bisignano

Shepardson · No. 2:24-cv-196 · Decided March 9, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana affirmed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of D. A. Shepardson’s applications for disability benefits. The court held that the Administrative Law Judge’s physical and mental residual functional capacity findings and reliance on vocational-expert testimony were supported by substantial evidence, and that Shepardson forfeited a challenge to the vocational expert’s methodology.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, Hammond Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Andrew P. Rodovich
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana
DECIDED	March 9, 2026
DOCKET	2:24-cv-196
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petition for judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner of Social Security's final decision denying Title II and Title XVI disability benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews whether the Commissioner's decision is supported by substantial evidence and whether the ALJ applied the correct legal standards. Findings supported by substantial evidence are conclusive, and the court may not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for the Commissioner's.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	D. A. Shepardson v. Frank J. Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

disability definition

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

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vocational-expert evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ's physical and mental residual-functional-capacity determination was supported by substantial evidence.
2. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated Shepardson's subjective statements and the opinions of a licensed clinical social worker.
3. Whether the ALJ properly relied on vocational-expert testimony at step five.
4. Whether Shepardson preserved a challenge to the vocational expert's methodology and job-number evidence.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ's RFC determination was supported by substantial evidence because the ALJ considered the relevant medical and nonmedical evidence, addressed the combined effects of Shepardson's impairments, and incorporated the limitations supported by the record.
2. The ALJ properly discounted Shepardson's alleged greater limitations and found the LCSW's opinions unpersuasive where the allegations and opinions were not supported by objective evidence and were contradicted by the record.
3. Shepardson forfeited the challenge to the vocational expert's methodology because she did not raise it during the administrative proceedings and the issue was not part of the administrative record.
4. The ALJ properly relied on the vocational expert's testimony because the hypothetical questions and RFC incorporated the limitations supported by the record, and Shepardson identified no additional restriction that should have been included.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The standard for judicial review of an ALJ’s finding that a claimant is not disabled within the meaning of the Social Security Act is limited to a determination of whether those findings are supported by substantial evidence.” (Discussion)

“This court does not have jurisdiction to reweigh evidence.” (Discussion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Shepardson alleged disability beginning in July 2017 based primarily on posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety with panic, and physical impairments including the effects of right knee surgery. The ALJ found severe impairments but determined that Shepardson did not meet or medically equal a listed impairment and retained the residual functional capacity for a restricted range of medium work. Relying on vocational-expert testimony,

the ALJ found that Shepardson could perform jobs existing in significant numbers in the national economy, including meat clerk, janitor, and cleaner.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Shepardson applied for Title II benefits on March 4, 2021, and Title XVI benefits on August 26, 2021, alleging disability beginning in July 2017. The SSA denied the applications initially and on reconsideration. After hearings, the ALJ found Shepardson not disabled on September 26, 2023, and the Appeals Council denied review, making the ALJ's decision the Commissioner's final decision. Shepardson sought judicial review, and the district court affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Moore v. Colvin, 743 F.3d 1118, 1120-21 (7th Cir. 2014)
- Bates v. Colvin, 736 F.3d 1093, 1097-98 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Swiecichowski v. Dudek, 113 F.4th 751, 756 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Rabdeau v. Bisignano, 155 F.4th 908, 912 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Jarnutowski v. Kijakazi, 48 F.4th 769, 773 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971)
- Consolidated Edison Co. v. NLRB, 305 U.S. 197, 229 (1938)
- Roddy v. Astrue, 705 F.3d 631, 636 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Lopez ex rel. Lopez v. Barnhart, 336 F.3d 535, 539 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Williams v. Colvin, 757 F.3d 610, 613 (7th Cir. 2014)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 139 S. Ct. 1148 (2019)
- Leisgang v. Kijakazi, 72 F.4th 216, 219-20 (7th Cir. 2023)
- SSR 96-8p, 1996 WL 374184, at *1
- Pepper v. Colvin, 712 F.3d 351, 362 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Yurt v. Colvin, 758 F.3d 850, 857 (7th Cir. 2014)
- Denton v. Astrue, 596 F.3d 419, 423 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Golembiewski v. Barnhart, 322 F.3d 912, 918 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Lothridge v. Saul, 984 F.3d 1227, 1232-33 (7th Cir. 2021)
- Thorlton v. King, 127 F.4th 1078, 1080 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Jeske v. Saul, 955 F.3d 583, 587 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Haynes v. Barnhart, 416 F.3d 621, 626 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Dickinson v. Berryhill, 2017 WL 2492614, at *5 (N.D. Ind. June 9, 2017)
- Powers v. Apfel, 207 F.3d 431, 434-35 (7th Cir. 2000)

- Butera v. Apfel, 173 F.3d 1049, 1055 (7th Cir. 1999)
- Warnell v. O'Malley, 97 F.4th 1050, 1053 (7th Cir. 2024)
- Dixon v. Massanari, 270 F.3d 1171, 1178 (7th Cir. 2001)
- Deborah M. v. Saul, 994 F.3d 785, 788 (7th Cir. 2021)
- Schmitz v. Colvin, 124 F.4th 1029, 1033 (7th Cir. 2024)
- Varga v. Colvin, 794 F.3d 809, 813 (7th Cir. 2015)
- Hampton-Lewis v. Berryhill, 2018 WL 6242463, at *7 (N.D. Ind. Nov. 29, 2018)
- Padua v. Bisignano, 145 F.4th 784, 792 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Jozefyk v. Berryhill, 923 F.3d 492, 498 (7th Cir. 2019)

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