

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Donnelly v. Commissioner of Social Security

Donnelly · No. 1:21-cv-01117-CDB (SS) · Decided August 21, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California granted the parties’ stipulated request for attorney’s fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act and costs under 28 U.S.C. § 1920. The court awarded \$2,311.81 in fees and \$402.00 in costs to the plaintiff, subject to potential Treasury Offset Program deductions and the payment terms specified in the stipulation.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	August 21, 2025
DOCKET	1:21-cv-01117-CDB (SS)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought attorney fees and costs under the Equal Access to Justice Act after obtaining summary judgment and a sentence-four remand in a Social Security action. The parties stipulated to the requested award, and the Commissioner did not oppose it.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court assessed whether Plaintiff was a prevailing party, whether the fee request was timely and reasonable, whether the government's position was substantially justified, and whether special circumstances made an award unjust.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential district court order

TOPICS

- attorney fees
- costs
- judicial review of agency action
- summary judgment
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- Social Security
- administrative law
- attorney fees
- costs
- remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff qualified as a prevailing party entitled to attorney fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act after a sentence-four remand.
2. Whether the stipulated EAJA fee request was timely and reasonable.
3. Whether the government established that its position was substantially justified or that special circumstances made an award unjust.
4. Whether Plaintiff was entitled to recover the \$402.00 filing fee as costs under 28 U.S.C. § 1920.
5. Whether payment of the EAJA award was subject to Treasury Offset Program offsets and, if no offset applied, could be transmitted directly to Plaintiff's counsel.

HOLDINGS

1. A party who obtains a sentence-four remand under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) is a prevailing party for purposes of the EAJA.
2. Plaintiff was entitled to \$2,311.81 in EAJA attorney fees because she prevailed, filed a timely request, the government did not show that its position was substantially justified, and no special circumstances made an award unjust.
3. The requested \$2,311.81 attorney-fee award was reasonable and commensurate with the work required to review the approximately 888-page administrative record and prepare the summary-judgment motion.
4. Plaintiff was entitled to recover \$402.00 in costs because court filing fees are recoverable costs under 28 U.S.C. § 1920.
5. The EAJA fees, expenses, and costs were subject to any applicable Treasury Offset Program offset; if the Treasury determined that Plaintiff owed no federal debt, payment could be made directly to Plaintiff's counsel under the parties' stipulation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Commissioner is directed to pay to Plaintiff as the prevailing party attorney’s fees in the amount of \$2,311.81, pursuant to the terms set forth in the parties’ stipulation.” (at 3)

“Plaintiff is awarded \$402.00 in costs pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1920.” (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff prevailed on a Social Security claim when the court granted summary judgment and remanded the matter for further administrative proceedings. The certified administrative record contained approximately 888 pages, and Plaintiff's summary-judgment motion presented approximately eight pages of argument. Plaintiff requested \$2,311.81 in EAJA attorney fees and \$402.00 in costs, representing the action's filing fee.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On May 22, 2025, the court granted Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment and remanded the case to the Commissioner for further proceedings under sentence four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g); judgment was entered the

same day. Plaintiff filed a stipulated request for EAJA fees and costs on August 20, 2025. The court granted the request and awarded \$2,311.81 in attorney fees and \$402.00 in costs.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Shalala v. Schaefer, 509 U.S. 292, 300-02 (1993)
- Van v. Barnhart, 483 F.3d 600, 607 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Sanchez v. Berryhill, No. 1:16-cv-01081-SKO, 2018 WL 509817, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Jan. 23, 2018)
- Knyazhina v. Colvin, No. 2:12-cv-2726 DAD, 2014 WL 5324302, at 1 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 17, 2014)
- Armstrong v. Astrue, No. CIV-S-07-1456-DAD, 2008 WL 2705023, at *2 (E.D. Cal. July 9, 2008)
- Astrue v. Ratliff, 560 U.S. 586 (2010)