

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Mark E. Allen v. Leland Dudek

Case No. ED CV 24-2281-E (C.D. Cal. May 21, 2025) · No. ED CV 24-2281-E · Decided May 21, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California reviews the denial of Mark E. Allen’s application for supplemental security income. The court holds that the Administrative Law Judge’s residual functional capacity assessment was supported by substantial evidence and that the ALJ gave legally sufficient reasons for discounting Plaintiff’s subjective complaints. The court therefore rejects Plaintiff’s challenge to the Commissioner’s decision.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Charles F. Eick
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	May 21, 2025
DOCKET	ED CV 24-2281-E
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner of Social Security's denial of supplemental security income benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), the court determines whether the Commissioner's decision is supported by substantial evidence and is free of legal error. The court must consider the record as a whole and may not substitute its judgment for that of the ALJ when the evidence reasonably supports either outcome.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum opinion; precedential status unknown
PARTIES	Mark E. A. v. Leland Dudek, Acting Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

- judicial review of agency action
- agency adjudication
- administrative law

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability benefits

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

disability benefits

evidence and subjective symptom testimony

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether substantial evidence supported the ALJ's residual-functional-capacity finding and conclusion that Plaintiff could perform work existing in significant numbers in the national economy.
2. Whether the ALJ provided legally sufficient reasons for discounting Plaintiff's subjective testimony and statements concerning the intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of his symptoms.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ's conclusion that Plaintiff could perform a limited range of light work and could perform jobs existing in significant numbers in the national economy was supported by substantial evidence and was not materially legally erroneous.
2. The ALJ did not materially err in discounting Plaintiff's subjective complaints because the ALJ provided sufficiently specific, permissible reasons supported by the record, including inconsistency with objective medical evidence, conservative or limited treatment, and evidence that medication controlled or improved symptoms.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"If the evidence can support either outcome, the court may not substitute its judgment for that of the ALJ."
(Opinion at Standard of Review)

"Because the ALJ's credibility findings were sufficiently specific to allow this Court to conclude that the ALJ rejected Plaintiff's testimony on permissible grounds, Moisa v. Barnhart, 367 F.3d at 885, the Court defers to the ALJ's credibility findings." (Opinion at Discussion § II.C)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged disability based on Bartter syndrome, chronic kidney disease, scoliosis, back pain, insomnia, colon cancer in remission, headaches, blurry vision, and learning disabilities. The ALJ found severe impairments of unspecified depressive disorder and chronic kidney disease but determined that Plaintiff could perform a limited range of light work involving simple instructions and no concentrated exposure to certain hazards. The medical record reflected generally stable renal functioning, normal or largely unremarkable examinations, medication treatment, and medical opinions supporting limitations no greater than those assessed by the ALJ. Plaintiff challenged the ALJ's evaluation of his testimony and subjective statements.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff applied for supplemental security income in August 2020. An ALJ found that Plaintiff had severe impairments but retained the residual functional capacity for a limited range of light work and denied benefits based on vocational-expert testimony. The Appeals Council denied review, and Plaintiff filed this action. The

parties consented to magistrate-judge jurisdiction; the court affirmed the administrative decision and dismissed the action with prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- *McCutcheon v. Hartford Life & Accident Insurance Co.*, 2009 WL 1971427, at *1 n.2 (C.D. Cal. July 1, 2009)
- *Chavez v. Bowen*, 844 F.2d 691 (9th Cir. 1988)
- *Carmickle v. Commissioner*, 533 F.3d 1155, 1159 (9th Cir. 2008)
- *Hoopai v. Astrue*, 499 F.3d 1071, 1074 (9th Cir. 2007)
- *Brewes v. Commissioner*, 682 F.3d 1157, 1161 (9th Cir. 2012)
- *Richardson v. Perales*, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971)
- *Widmark v. Barnhart*, 454 F.3d 1063, 1066 (9th Cir. 2006)
- *Tackett v. Apfel*, 180 F.3d 1094, 1098 (9th Cir. 1999)
- *Orn v. Astrue*, 495 F.3d 625, 631-32 (9th Cir. 2007)
- *Tonapetyan v. Halter*, 242 F.3d 1144, 1149 (9th Cir. 2001)
- *Andrews v. Shalala*, 53 F.3d 1035, 1041 (9th Cir. 1995)
- *Barker v. Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 882 F.2d 1474, 1478-80 (9th Cir. 1989)
- *Martinez v. Heckler*, 807 F.2d 771, 774-75 (9th Cir. 1986)
- *Anderson v. Sullivan*, 914 F.2d 1121, 1124 (9th Cir. 1990)
- *Nyman v. Heckler*, 779 F.2d 528, 531 (9th Cir. 1985)
- *Berry v. Astrue*, 622 F.3d 1228, 1234 (9th Cir. 2010)
- *Lester v. Chater*, 81 F.3d 821, 834 (9th Cir. 1995)
- *Smolen v. Chater*, 80 F.3d 1273, 1282-84 (9th Cir. 1996)
- *Moisa v. Barnhart*, 367 F.3d 882, 885 (9th Cir. 2004)
- *Holohan v. Massanari*, 246 F.3d 1195, 1208 (9th Cir. 2001)
- *McLeod v. Astrue*, 640 F.3d 881, 886-88 (9th Cir. 2011)
- *Burch v. Barnhart*, 400 F.3d 676, 679 (9th Cir. 2005)
- *Smartt v. Kijakazi*, 53 F.4th 489, 498-500 (9th Cir. 2022)
- *Carmickle v. Commissioner*, 533 F.3d 1155, 1161 (9th Cir. 2008)
- *Kitchen v. Kijakazi*, 82 F.4th 732, 739 (9th Cir. 2023)
- *Parra v. Astrue*, 481 F.3d 742, 751 (9th Cir. 2007), cert. denied, 552 U.S. 1141 (2008)
- *Meanel v. Apfel*, 172 F.3d 1111, 1114 (9th Cir. 1999)
- *Bunnell v. Sullivan*, 947 F.2d 341, 346 (9th Cir. 1991) (en banc)
- *Matthews v. Shalala*, 10 F.3d 678, 679-80 (9th Cir. 1993)

- Johnson v. Shalala, 60 F.3d 1428, 1434 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Boggs v. Kijakazi, 2022 WL 1657022, at *1 (9th Cir. May 25, 2022)
- Wellington v. Berryhill, 878 F.3d 867, 876 (9th Cir. 2017)
- Lapuzz v. Berryhill, 740 Fed. App'x 596, 597 (9th Cir. 2018)
- Tommasetti v. Astrue, 533 F.3d 1035, 1039-40 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Warre v. Commissioner, 439 F.3d 1001, 1006 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Lambert v. Saul, 980 F.3d 1266, 1277 (9th Cir. 2020)
- Lasich v. Astrue, 252 Fed. App'x 823, 825 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Flaten v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 44 F.3d 1453, 1464 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Magallanes v. Bowen, 881 F.2d 747, 750, 755-56 (9th Cir. 1989)
- Nerio Mejia v. O'Malley, 120 F.4th 1360, 1363 (9th Cir. 2024)
- Ferguson v. O'Malley, 95 F.4th 1194, 1197-98 (9th Cir. 2024)
- Glanden v. Kijakazi, 86 F.4th 838, 846 (9th Cir. 2023)
- Leon v. Berryhill, 880 F.3d 1041, 1046 (9th Cir. 2017)
- Ahearn v. Saul, 988 F.3d 1111, 1116 (9th Cir. 2021)