

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Randolph D. v. Commissioner of Social Security

Randolph D. · No. 23-CV-1021-FPG · Decided December 11, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of New York granted Plaintiff Randolph D.’s motion for attorney’s fees under 42 U.S.C. § 406(b) following a remand and subsequent award of Social Security benefits. The court awarded counsel \$38,471.25, representing 25% of the past-due benefits, and directed counsel to remit the previously awarded \$9,195.81 in Equal Access to Justice Act fees to Plaintiff.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of New York
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of New York
DECIDED	December 11, 2025
DOCKET	23-CV-1021-FPG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for an award of attorney's fees under 42 U.S.C. § 406(b) after obtaining a remand and subsequently receiving an award of Social Security benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently reviewed the contingent-fee request to determine whether the requested fee was reasonable under 42 U.S.C. § 406(b), subject to the statutory 25 percent cap.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Randolph D. v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

- judicial review of agency action
- administrative law
- remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

- Social Security
- administrative law
- attorney's fees

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether counsel's requested fee of \$38,471.25 under 42 U.S.C. § 406(b) was within the statutory cap and reasonable for the representation provided.
2. Whether counsel was required to remit the previously awarded EAJA fees to Plaintiff after receiving the § 406(b) fee.

HOLDINGS

1. The requested \$38,471.25 fee was permissible because it represented 25 percent of Plaintiff's past-due benefits and was reasonable in light of the character and results of the representation, the absence of unreasonable delay, and the effective hourly rate.
2. After receiving the § 406(b) fee, counsel must remit the \$9,195.81 EAJA fee to Plaintiff.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Within the 25% boundary, “the attorney for the successful claimant must show that the fee sought is reasonable for the services rendered.”” (Discussion)

“After counsel receives the § 406(b) fee, counsel must remit the \$9,195.81 EAJA fee to Plaintiff.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff obtained a remand of his Social Security disability-benefits claim after counsel filed a motion for judgment on the pleadings. On remand, the SSA awarded Plaintiff benefits, from which \$38,471.25 was withheld for potential attorney's fees. Counsel spent 38.7 hours on the appeal and had previously received \$9,195.81 in EAJA fees.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff appealed the Social Security Administration's denial of disability benefits. In October 2024, the Court granted in part Plaintiff's motion for judgment on the pleadings and remanded for further proceedings. After the SSA issued a Notice of Award granting benefits and the Court awarded counsel \$9,195.81 under the Equal Access to Justice Act, Plaintiff moved for \$38,471.25 in fees under 42 U.S.C. § 406(b).

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Abbey v. Berryhill, No. 6:17-CV-06430-MAT, 2019 WL 336572, at *2 (W.D.N.Y. Jan. 28, 2019)
- Gisbrecht v. Barnhart, 535 U.S. 789, 807 (2002)
- Fields v. Kijakazi, 24 F.4th 845 (2d Cir. 2022)
- McDonald v. Comm’r of Soc. Sec., No. 16-CV-926, 2019 WL 1375084, at *2 (W.D.N.Y. Mar. 27, 2019)

- *Torres v. Colvin*, No. 11-CV-5309, 2014 WL 909765, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 6, 2014)
- *Morrison v. Saul*, No. 16-CV-4168, 2019 WL 6915954, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Dec. 19, 2019)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK RANDOLPH D., Plaintiff, Case # 23-CV-1021-FPG v. DECISION AND ORDER COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY, Defendant. INTRODUCTION Plaintiff Randolph D. brought this appeal of the Social Security Administration's ("SSA") decision to deny him disability benefits. ECF No. 1.

In October 2024, the Court granted in part Plaintiff's motion for judgment on the pleadings and remanded the case for further proceedings. ECF No. 19. The Court entered a Stipulation and Order awarding Plaintiff's attorney, Mary Ellen Gill, \$9,195.81 in fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act ("EAJA"), 28 U.S.C. § 2412. ECF No. 22. Thereafter, the SSA issued a Notice of Award granting Plaintiff benefits.

See ECF No. 23- 3. Plaintiff now moves for \$38,471.25 in attorney's fees under 42 U.S.C. § 406(b). ECF No. 23. For the reasons that follow, Plaintiff's motion is GRANTED, counsel is awarded \$38,471.25 in fees, and counsel shall remit the \$9,195.81 in EAJA fees to Plaintiff. DISCUSSION The Social Security Act provides that [w]henver a court renders a judgment favorable to a claimant under this subchapter who was represented before the court by an attorney, the court may determine and allow as part of its judgment a reasonable fee for such representation, not in excess of 25 percent of the total of the past-due benefits to which the claimant is entitled by reason of such judgment.

42 U.S.C. § 406(b)(1)(A). Within the 25% boundary, "the attorney for the successful claimant must show that the fee sought is reasonable for the services rendered." *Abbey v. Berryhill*, No. 6:17-CV-06430-MAT, 2019 WL 336572, at *2 (W.D.N.Y. Jan. 28, 2019) (quoting *Gisbrecht v. Barnhart*, 535 U.S. 789, 807 (2002)).

The statute also requires "court review of [contingent fee] arrangements as an independent check, to assure that they yield reasonable results in particular cases." *Id.* After a court confirms that the fee is within the 25% statutory boundary, it analyzes three factors to determine if the resulting fee is reasonable. Those factors are: (1) whether the requested fee is out of line with the "character of the representation and the results the representation achieved"; (2) whether the attorney unreasonably delayed the proceedings in an attempt to increase the accumulation of benefits and thereby increase his fee; and (3) whether "the benefits awarded are large in comparison to the amount of time counsel spent on the case," the so-called "windfall" factor.

Id. (citation omitted). The Court has reviewed each factor to assure that the requested fee is reasonable. As an initial matter, counsel's request for \$38,471.25 in fees represents 25% of the award and does not exceed the statutory cap. See ECF No. 18-2 at 5; ECF No. 18-5 at 4.

As to the first factor, the Court finds that the requested fee is in line with the character of the representation and the results it achieved, because counsel filed a motion for judgment on the pleadings and obtained a remand, which ultimately led to a favorable decision awarding Plaintiff benefits. See ECF Nos. 8, 19.

As to the second factor, there is no evidence that counsel unreasonably delayed the proceedings in an attempt to inflate past due benefits and the potential fee award. As to the third factor, i.e., whether the fee award constitutes a windfall to the attorney, courts often examine the lodestar figure to help them make this determination. See *Abbey*, 2019 WL 336572, at *2; see generally *Fields v. Kijakazi*, 24 F.4th 845 (2d Cir.

2022). Here, counsel spent 38.7 hours in connection with the appeal to this Court. ECF No. 23-6 at 2. Dividing the \$38,471.25 fee requested by 38.7 hours yields an hourly rate of \$994.09. This Court has found such rates reasonable where, as here, counsel developed meritorious, non-boilerplate arguments on the claimant's behalf. *McDonald v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec.*, No. 16-CV-926, 2019 WL 1375084, at *2 (W.D.N.Y.

Mar. 27, 2019) (awarding fees with effective hourly rate of \$1,051.64); see also *Torres v. Colvin*, No. 11-CV-5309, 2014 WL 909765, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 6, 2014) (“[A] substantial body of caselaw has awarded rates that approach, if they do not exceed, \$1,000.00.”); *Morrison v. Saul*, No. 16-CV-4168, 2019 WL 6915954, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Dec. 19, 2019) (approving fees based on effective hourly rate of \$935.52).

Accordingly, based on all of the above, the Court concludes that the requested fee award is reasonable. Furthermore, counsel must refund the EAJA fees to Plaintiff. CONCLUSION Plaintiff's motion for attorney's fees under § 406(b) (ECF No. 23) is GRANTED and Plaintiff is awarded \$38,471.25 in fees.

The Court directs the Commissioner to release those funds withheld from Plaintiff's benefits award. After counsel receives the § 406(b) fee, counsel must remit the \$9,195.81 EAJA fee to Plaintiff. IT IS SO ORDERED. Dated: December 11, 2025 Rochester, New York United States District Mdge Western District of New York