

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
ARKANSAS, FORT SMITH DIVISION

Christine Ratliff-Cueto v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner, Social
Security Administration

Ratliff-Cueto · No. 2:25-cv-02051 · Decided April 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas reviewed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of Christine Ratliff-Cueto’s application for Disability Insurance Benefits. The court held that the Administrative Law Judge’s residual functional capacity determination and findings regarding the medical equivalence of impairments were supported by substantial evidence. The court affirmed the denial of benefits.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas, Fort Smith Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Spencer G. Singleton
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas, Fort Smith Division
DECIDED	April 3, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-02051
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's final decision denying Disability Insurance Benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews whether the Commissioner's findings are supported by substantial evidence on the record as a whole. Substantial evidence is less than a preponderance but sufficient for a reasonable mind to find the evidence adequate. The court must affirm when substantial evidence supports the ALJ's decision, even if substantial evidence also supports a contrary outcome.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Christine Ratliff-Cueto v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner, Social Security Administration

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether substantial evidence supported the ALJ's residual functional capacity determination.
2. Whether the ALJ erred by failing to find that Plaintiff's combination of impairments medically equaled a listed impairment.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ's residual functional capacity determination and denial of benefits were supported by substantial evidence and therefore had to be affirmed.
2. Plaintiff failed to establish medical equivalence because she did not identify a specific listing or provide a clear explanation and supporting evidence showing that her impairments equaled a listing.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"If substantial evidence supports the ALJ's conclusion, the Court cannot reverse simply because substantial evidence also supports a different outcome." (Applicable Law)

"Because substantial evidence exists in this record through the various medical opinions relied upon by the ALJ, this Court must affirm the ALJ's decision." (Discussion)

"Based on the foregoing, the undersigned finds that the decision of the ALJ, denying benefits to Plaintiff, is supported by substantial evidence, and is AFFIRMED." (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Christine Ratliff-Cueto alleged disability beginning September 18, 2020, based on a heart attack, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and renal agenesis. The ALJ found severe impairments including peripheral neuropathy, chronic kidney disease, diabetes mellitus, chronic ischemic heart disease, and a spine disorder, but determined that none met or medically equaled a listed impairment. The ALJ found that Plaintiff could perform a restricted range of light work and that jobs existed in significant numbers in the national economy that she could perform.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff applied for Disability Insurance Benefits, was denied initially and on reconsideration, and received an administrative hearing before an ALJ. The ALJ issued an unfavorable decision on May 22, 2024. Plaintiff filed this action on May 14, 2025, and the parties submitted appeal briefs. The district court affirmed the Commissioner's decision.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Ramirez v. Barnhart, 292 F.3d 576, 583 (8th Cir. 2002)
- Johnson v. Apfel, 240 F.3d 1145, 1147 (8th Cir. 2001)
- Jones v. Astrue, 619 F.3d 963, 968 (8th Cir. 2010)
- Haley v. Massanari, 258 F.3d 742, 747 (8th Cir. 2001)
- Goff v. Barnhart, 421 F.3d 785, 790-91 (8th Cir. 2005)
- Young v. Apfel, 221 F.3d 1065, 1068 (8th Cir. 2000)
- Cox v. Apfel, 160 F.3d 1203, 1206 (8th Cir. 1998)
- Carlson v. Astrue, 604 F.3d 589, 594 (8th Cir. 2010)
- Schmitt v. Kijakazi, 27 F.4th 1353, 1358 (8th Cir. 2022)

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