

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH

Joseph W. v. Frank Bisignano

Joseph W. · No. 1:25-cv-00029-JCB · Decided March 20, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Utah reviews the denial of Joseph W.'s claim for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. The court holds that the Administrative Law Judge failed to explain why he accepted some of Dr. Thomas L. Lombardi's medical-opinion restrictions while rejecting others. The court reverses the Commissioner's decision and remands for further proceedings.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Utah
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jared C. Bennett
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Utah
DECIDED	March 20, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-00029-JCB
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Judicial review of the Commissioner of Social Security's final decision denying Disability Insurance Benefits under Title II of the Social Security Act.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed whether the Commissioner's factual findings were supported by substantial evidence and whether the correct legal standards were applied. It could not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for the ALJ's.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum decision and order
PARTIES	Joseph W. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

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

PRACTICE AREAS

- administrative law
- social security
- disability benefits

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ erred by failing to explain why he accepted some portions of Dr. Lombardi's partially persuasive medical opinion while rejecting or failing to address other portions.
2. Whether that error was harmful and required reversal and remand of the Commissioner's decision.

HOLDINGS

1. When an ALJ affords at least some weight to a medical source's opinion, the ALJ must explain why the ALJ accepted some recommendations while rejecting others. Failure to provide that explanation is legal error.
2. The error was harmful because the unexplained restrictions went to the heart of the RFC determination and could affect whether Plaintiff could perform jobs in the national economy.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Where an ALJ affords at least some weight (i.e., something other than outright rejection) to a medical source who provides a medical opinion, the ALJ must explain why he/she accepted some of the medical opinion’s recommendations while rejecting others.”

“an ALJ cannot, without explanation, adopt some restrictions assessed by a physician and reject others that the physician also assessed.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Joseph W. alleged disability from various physical and mental impairments and sought Disability Insurance Benefits. Dr. Thomas L. Lombardi provided opinions concerning Plaintiff's ability to sit, stand, walk, use his hands, concentrate, persist, maintain pace, rest during the workday, and miss work. The ALJ found Lombardi's opinions partially persuasive, adopted some recommendations, rejected some with explanation, and rejected or failed to address others without explanation. The vocational expert testified that being off task 12 to 15 percent of scheduled production time would preclude the identified sedentary jobs.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff applied for Disability Insurance Benefits in August 2022. His claim was denied initially and on reconsideration; after a February 1, 2024 hearing, the ALJ denied the claim on March 18, 2024. The Appeals Council denied review on January 15, 2025, making the ALJ's decision final, and Plaintiff sought judicial review. The district court reversed and remanded for further proceedings.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Commissioner must conduct further proceedings consistent with the decision, including explaining why portions of Dr. Lombardi's medical opinions were accepted while other portions were rejected or not adopted.

CASES CITED

- Lax v. Astrue, 489 F.3d 1080, 1084 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Madrid v. Barnhart, 447 F.3d 788, 790 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Jensen v. Barnhart, 436 F.3d 1163, 1165 (10th Cir. 2005)
- Williams v. Bowen, 844 F.2d 748, 750-51 (10th Cir. 1988)
- Haga v. Astrue, 482 F.3d 1205, 1208-09 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Benavidez v. Colvin, 650 F. App'x 619, 621-22 (10th Cir. 2016)
- Lopez v. Colvin, 642 F. App'x 826, 829 (10th Cir. 2016)
- Allen v. Barnhart, 357 F.3d 1140, 1145 (10th Cir. 2004)

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