

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
TEXAS, HOUSTON DIVISION

Stanford Degraffenreaid v. CEVA Logistics U.S., Inc., et al.

DeGraffenreaid · No. 4:23-CV-04230 · Decided March 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas grants CEVA Logistics U.S., Inc. and CEVA Ground, U.S., LP’s motion for summary judgment in Stanford Degraffenreaid’s action alleging disability discrimination, failure to accommodate, and retaliation under the ADA and TCHRA. The court concludes that, although a fact issue existed regarding whether Degraffenreaid’s chronic kidney disease constituted a disability, he failed to show that CEVA’s stated reason for terminating him—unexcused absences and failure to provide supporting medical documentation—was pretextual.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Houston Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Andrew S. Hanen
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas
DECIDED	March 30, 2026
DOCKET	4:23-CV-04230
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved for summary judgment on the plaintiff's ADA and TCHRA disability-discrimination, failure-to-accommodate, and retaliation claims.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is proper when the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and that it is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court views reasonable inferences in the light most favorable to the nonmovant, but the nonmovant must identify specific evidence showing a genuine dispute.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion
PARTIES	CEVA Logistics U.S., Inc., CEVA Ground, U.S., LP v. Stanford Degraffenreaid

TOPICS

ada discrimination

disability discrimination

reasonable accommodation

retaliation

summary judgment

PRACTICE AREAS

employment law

disability discrimination

civil rights

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Degraffenreaid presented sufficient evidence to avoid summary judgment on his ADA and TCHRA disability-discrimination claim.
2. Whether CEVA's stated reason for terminating Degraffenreaid—eighteen days of absence without supporting medical documentation—was pretext for disability discrimination.
3. Whether Degraffenreaid presented sufficient evidence to avoid summary judgment on his ADA and TCHRA retaliation claim.
4. Whether requesting FMLA leave or short-term disability benefits constituted a request for reasonable accommodation under the ADA.
5. Whether CEVA failed to reasonably accommodate Degraffenreaid by refusing additional time to obtain medical documentation and attend a specialist appointment.

HOLDINGS

1. Degraffenreaid raised a fact issue as to whether his chronic kidney disease substantially limited one or more major life activities and therefore constituted a disability under the ADA and TCHRA.
2. Summary judgment was proper because, although Degraffenreaid raised a fact issue regarding disability, he failed to present sufficient evidence that CEVA's legitimate, nondiscriminatory reason for terminating him was pretext for disability discrimination.
3. Summary judgment was proper on Degraffenreaid's ADA and TCHRA retaliation claim because he failed to show that CEVA's stated reason for terminating him was pretext for retaliation or that the termination would not have occurred but for protected activity.
4. A request for FMLA leave is not a request for reasonable accommodation under the ADA.
5. Even assuming the request for short-term disability benefits constituted a valid ADA accommodation request, Degraffenreaid failed to show that CEVA's conduct caused a breakdown in the good-faith interactive process or otherwise violated the ADA.
6. Degraffenreaid failed to show that he requested, or that CEVA denied, a reasonable accommodation consisting of additional leave through his August 31, 2020 specialist appointment.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Thus, Plaintiff has a raised a fact issue as to whether his chronic kidney disease “substantially limit[ed] one or more of [his] major life activities,” and consequently, as to whether he has a disability under the ADA/TCHRA.” (at 9)

“Plaintiff did not show up for work for eighteen days and, when asked to either provide medical documentation to support such absence or return to work, Plaintiff failed to do either.” (at 12)

“An employer will not be found to have violated the ADA “when responsibility for the breakdown of the ‘informal, interactive process’ is traceable to the employee and not the employer.”” (at 19)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Degraffenreaid worked for CEVA from 2010 until his termination in August 2020, ultimately serving as a Fleet Operations Manager who worked onsite and supervised employees. He had chronic kidney disease, and in July 2020 his GFR fell below 10; he then stopped reporting to work because he believed his condition placed him at heightened risk from COVID-19. His requests for FMLA leave and short-term disability benefits were denied, and CEVA requested medical documentation supporting his continued absence or his return to work. After Degraffenreaid supplied a physician's note stating only that he faced a higher-than-average risk of COVID-19 complications, CEVA terminated him for failing to report to work and failing to provide the requested supporting information.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Degraffenreaid filed his original complaint on November 8, 2023, asserting disability or perceived-disability discrimination, failure to reasonably accommodate, and retaliation under the ADA and the TCHRA/Texas Labor Code. Defendants moved for summary judgment on all claims. The court granted the motion in its entirety and dismissed all claims with prejudice; a final judgment was to be entered separately.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Triple Tee Golf Inc. v. Nike, Inc., 485 F.3d 253, 261 (5th Cir. 2007)
- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 321-25 (1986)
- Matsushita Elec. Indus. Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp., 475 U.S. 574, 587 (1986)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248, 255 (1986)
- Malacara v. Garber, 353 F.3d 393, 405 (5th Cir. 2003)
- Williams v. Tarrant Cnty. Coll. Dist., 717 F. App'x 440, 445 (5th Cir. 2018)
- Pegram v. Honeywell, Inc., 361 F.3d 272, 285-87 (5th Cir. 2004)
- Hamilton v. Dallas Cnty., 79 F.4th 494 (5th Cir. 2023)
- E.E.O.C. v. LHC Grp., Inc., 773 F.3d 688, 697 (5th Cir. 2014)
- Gober v. Frankel Fam. Tr., 537 F. App'x 518, 520 (5th Cir. 2013)
- Nall v. BNSF Ry. Co., 917 F.3d 335, 348 (5th Cir. 2019)
- Rodriguez v. ConAgra Grocery Products Co., 436 F.3d 468, 473-74 (5th Cir. 2006)
- NME Hosps., Inc. v. Rennels, 994 S.W.2d 142, 144 (Tex. 1999)

- McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green, 411 U.S. 792 (1973)
- Roberson-King v. Louisiana Workforce Comm'n, Office of Workforce Dev., 904 F.3d 377, 381 (5th Cir. 2018)
- LeMaire v. La. Dep't of Transp. & Dev., 480 F.3d 383, 391 (5th Cir. 2007)
- Wallace v. Methodist Hosp. Sys., 271 F.3d 212, 220 (5th Cir. 2001)
- Goudeau v. Nat'l Oilwell Varco, L.P., 793 F.3d 470, 478 (5th Cir. 2015)
- Trautman v. Time Warner Cable Tex., L.L.C., 756 F. App'x 421, 428-30, 430 (5th Cir. 2018)
- Powers v. Woodlands Religious Cmty. Inc., 323 F. App'x 300, 302 (5th Cir. 2009)
- Seaman v. CSPH, Inc., 179 F.3d 297, 301 (5th Cir. 1999)
- Acker v. Gen. Motors, L.L.C., 853 F.3d 784, 791-92 (5th Cir. 2017)
- Neely v. PSEG Tex., Ltd. P'ship, 735 F.3d 242, 247 (5th Cir. 2013)
- Claiborne v. Recovery Sch. Dist., 690 F. App'x 249, 253-55 (5th Cir. 2017)
- Robertson v. Neuromedical Ctr., 161 F.3d 292, 295 (5th Cir. 1998)
- Amsel v. Tex. Water Dev. Bd., 464 F. App'x 395, 400 (5th Cir. 2012) (per curiam)
- EEOC v. Agro Distribution, LLC, 555 F.3d 462, 471 (5th Cir. 2009)
- Griffin v. United Parcel Serv., Inc., 661 F.3d 216, 224 (5th Cir. 2011)
- Loulseged v. Akzo Nobel Inc., 178 F.3d 731, 736 (5th Cir. 1999)