

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA

Adam Taylor Ward v. Commissioner of Social Security

Ward · No. 1:25-cv-00093-ALT · Decided December 11, 2025

SUMMARY

The court affirmed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of Adam Taylor Ward’s applications for Disability Insurance Benefits and Supplemental Security Income. The court held that the Administrative Law Judge properly evaluated the psychological consultative examiner’s opinion and adequately supported the residual functional capacity finding with substantial evidence.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Andrew L. Teel
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana
DECIDED	December 11, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-00093-ALT
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Ward sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's final decision denying his applications for Disability Insurance Benefits and Supplemental Security Income. The district court reviewed the administrative record and affirmed the Commissioner's decision.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews whether the ALJ's factual findings are supported by substantial evidence and whether the Commissioner applied the correct legal standard. It reviews the entire administrative record but does not reweigh evidence, resolve conflicts, decide credibility questions, or substitute its judgment for the Commissioner's.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	Adam Taylor Ward v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

- judicial review of agency action
- administrative law
- disability definition

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ improperly evaluated and characterized the examining opinion of Leslie Predina, Ph.D.
2. Whether the ALJ's residual functional capacity finding was supported by substantial evidence and adequately incorporated supported mental limitations.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ did not improperly cherry-pick or mischaracterize Dr. Predina's opinion by focusing on her finding that Ward had moderate difficulties with inattention and by treating her other observations as insufficiently specific to establish additional work-related limitations.
2. The ALJ's RFC finding, including the limitation that Ward could carry out simple instructions, was supported by substantial evidence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Court’s task is limited to determining whether the ALJ’s factual findings are supported by substantial evidence, which means “such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion.”” (AR 24)

“Rather, if the findings of the Commissioner . . . are supported by substantial evidence, they are conclusive.” (AR 24)

“In shorthand terms, an ALJ “needs to provide a logical bridge from the evidence to [her] conclusion.”” (AR 24)

“It is axiomatic that the claimant bears the burden of supplying adequate records and evidence to prove their claim of disability.” (AR 24)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ward alleged disability based primarily on cervical and lumbar spine disorders, chronic pain, radiculopathy, spinal stenosis, and arthritis, along with mental and other impairments identified by the ALJ. He had past work as a quality technician and stocker and was thirty-eight years old on the date of the Commissioner's final decision. Consultative psychologist Leslie Predina observed moderate difficulties with inattention but also concluded that Ward appeared to have the cognitive ability to perform jobs comparable to his past work. The ALJ limited Ward to light work with postural restrictions and simple instructions and found that he could perform marker, cleaner, and sales-attendant jobs.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ward applied for DIB and SSI in October 2022, alleging disability beginning September 1, 2019. His claims were denied initially and on reconsideration. After a January 9, 2024 hearing, the ALJ issued an unfavorable decision on February 22, 2024, finding that Ward could perform a significant number of light-exertional jobs.

The Appeals Council denied review on January 15, 2025, and Ward filed this action on February 28, 2025. The district court affirmed the Commissioner's decision and directed entry of judgment for the Commissioner.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Pufahl v. Bisignano, 142 F.4th 446, 452-53 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Sevec v. Kijakazi, 59 F.4th 293, 298 (7th Cir. 2023)
- Fetting v. Kijakazi, 62 F.4th 332, 336 (7th Cir. 2023)
- Stevenson v. Chater, 105 F.3d 1151, 1154 (7th Cir. 1997)
- Schmidt v. Barnhart, 395 F.3d 737, 744 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Clifford v. Apfel, 227 F.3d 863, 869 (7th Cir. 2000)
- Jens v. Barnhart, 347 F.3d 209, 212 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Books v. Chater, 91 F.3d 972, 978 (7th Cir. 1996)
- Warnell v. O'Malley, 97 F.4th 1050, 1053 (7th Cir. 2024)
- Golembiewski v. Barnhart, 322 F.3d 912, 917 (7th Cir. 2003)
- John B. v. Saul, No. 2:18-cv-00223-JVB-JEM, 2019 WL 4233744, at *2 (N.D. Ind. Sept. 5, 2019)
- Scheck v. Barnhart, 357 F.3d 697, 702 (7th Cir. 2004)
- Jozefyk v. Berryhill, 923 F.3d 492, 497-98 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Burmeister v. Berryhill, 920 F.3d 507, 511 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Murphy v. Astrue, 454 F. App'x 514, 518 (7th Cir. 2012)
- Milliken v. Astrue, 397 F. App'x 218, 221-22 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Garland v. Dai, 593 U.S. 357, 358, 369 (2021)
- Morales v. O'Malley, 103 F.4th 469, 471 (7th Cir. 2024)