

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS, EASTERN DIVISION

Joshua K. v. Frank Bisignano

Joshua K. v. Bisignano, No. 1:23-CV-04344 (N.D. Ill. Mar. 27, 2026) · No. 1:23-CV-04344 · Decided March 27, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois reviews the Social Security Commissioner’s denial of Joshua K.’s application for disability benefits. The court concludes that the Administrative Law Judge inadequately evaluated the claimant’s fibromyalgia, reported limitations and pain, conservative treatment, and treating physician’s opinions, and remands the matter for further consideration. The government’s motion for summary judgment is denied, and the claimant’s motion is granted to the extent of vacating the Commissioner’s decision and remanding.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Edmond E. Chang
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
DECIDED	March 27, 2026
DOCKET	1:23-CV-04344
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal from the Commissioner of Social Security's final decision denying Joshua K.'s application for disability benefits; the government moved for summary judgment seeking affirmance, and Joshua K. sought remand or reversal.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews the Commissioner's legal conclusions de novo and factual findings for substantial evidence. The court must remand when the ALJ fails to provide a logical bridge between the evidence and the conclusions or fails to consider all relevant evidence.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	Joshua K. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated the limitations caused by Joshua K.'s fibromyalgia.
2. Whether the ALJ adequately considered Joshua K.'s testimony and other evidence concerning the intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of his pain and difficulty performing daily activities.
3. Whether the ALJ adequately explained the weight given to Dr. Harding's evaluations and built a logical bridge from the evidence to the residual-functional-capacity finding.
4. Whether the ALJ's decision was supported by substantial evidence and complied with applicable Social Security regulations.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ improperly evaluated Joshua K.'s fibromyalgia by relying substantially on mild imaging, the absence of a musculoskeletal impairment, and a normal electromyogram, none of which adequately measured the effects of fibromyalgia-related pain.
2. The ALJ failed to adequately evaluate Joshua K.'s testimony and evidence concerning his pain and limited daily activities because the ALJ relied on his ability to perform activities slowly without discussing the significant limitations accompanying those activities.
3. The ALJ failed to build a logical bridge when discounting Joshua K.'s pain based on conservative treatment and when discounting Dr. Harding's in-person examinations based on their age while relying more heavily on similarly dated evidence.
4. The ALJ did not commit reversible error merely by imposing greater work restrictions than the state-agency physicians recommended.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“a person's ability to perform daily activities, especially if that can be done only with significant limitations, does not necessarily translate into an ability to work full-time.” (14)

“The Court emphasizes again that “the problem is not that the ALJ weighed the evidence in a certain way” but rather that the ALJ “ignore[d] an entire line of evidence contrary to her ruling.”” (15)

“But this is not to say, as Joshua contends, that the ALJ erred by imposing more limitations than the state-agency physicians did on the work that Joshua could perform.” (17)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Joshua K., age 41 at the ALJ hearing, had worked for more than twenty years as a construction worker and supervisor before stopping work because of physical ailments. The record documented neck, shoulder, back, and hip pain, degenerative joint disease, degenerative disc disease, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, an antalgic gait, and limitations in walking, sitting, dressing, cooking, and other daily activities. Mayo Clinic physicians diagnosed fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome after observing widespread pain and 18 of 18 tender points. The ALJ nevertheless found that Joshua retained the residual functional capacity for sedentary work and could perform several jobs existing in significant numbers in the national economy.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Joshua K. applied for disability benefits in March 2021. The application was denied initially and on reconsideration, and an ALJ held a hearing in September 2022 before finding that Joshua was not disabled. The Appeals Council denied review on May 2, 2023, making the ALJ's decision the Commissioner's final decision. Joshua timely filed suit under 42 U.S.C. §§ 405(g) and 1383(c)(3).

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Commissioner's decision is vacated, and the matter is remanded to the ALJ for further proceedings consistent with the opinion, including proper consideration of fibromyalgia, the evidence concerning pain and daily activities, conservative-treatment explanations, and Dr. Harding's evaluations.

CASES CITED

- Heckler v. Day, 467 U.S. 104, 106-07 (1984)
- Zurawski v. Halter, 245 F.3d 881, 885-86 (7th Cir. 2001)
- Kaplarevic v. Saul, 3 F.4th 940, 942 (7th Cir. 2021)
- Villano v. Astrue, 556 F.3d 558, 561-62 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Nelms v. Astrue, 553 F.3d 1093, 1097 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Schmoll v. Harris, 636 F.2d 1146, 1150 (7th Cir. 1980)
- Moss v. Astrue, 555 F.3d 556, 561 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Jones v. Astrue, 623 F.3d 1155, 1160 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Steele v. Barnhart, 290 F.3d 936, 940 (7th Cir. 2002)
- Murphy v. Astrue, 496 F.3d 630, 634-35 (7th Cir. 2007)
- Herron v. Shalala, 19 F.3d 329, 333 (7th Cir. 1994)
- Pufahl v. Bisignano, 142 F.4th 446, 458 (7th Cir. 2025)
- Gerstner v. Berryhill, 879 F.3d 257, 264 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Lanzi-Bland v. Berryhill, 2017 WL 4797529, at *4 (N.D. Ill. Oct. 24, 2017)
- Moore v. Colvin, 743 F.3d 1118, 1123 (7th Cir. 2014)

- Roddy v. Astrue, 705 F.3d 631, 639 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Craft v. Astrue, 539 F.3d 668, 680 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Reinaas v. Saul, 953 F.3d 461, 467 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Hill v. Colvin, 807 F.3d 862, 868-69 (7th Cir. 2015)
- Beardsley v. Colvin, 758 F.3d 834, 840 (7th Cir. 2014)
- Lambert v. Berryhill, 896 F.3d 768, 774 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Lothridge v. Saul, 984 F.3d 1227, 1234 (7th Cir. 2021)
- Meuser v. Colvin, 838 F.3d 905, 911 (7th Cir. 2016)
- Patrick C. v. Saul, 2020 WL 6287370, at *8 (N.D. Ill. Oct. 27, 2020)
- Rice v. Barnhart, 384 F.3d 363, 370 (7th Cir. 2004)
- Thomas v. Colvin, 745 F.3d 802, 808 (7th Cir. 2014)

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