

## Testifying At Your Disability Hearing

- Arrive at the building 30 minutes early
  - (Mary Kay will either already be there, for a prior hearing, or arrive 15 minutes ahead of the hearing)
- The Social Security hearing room is a small, private conference room
- Social Security hearings are informal and last about one hour
- Dress casual, like you are going to a doctor's office
- Tell the truth, as you are under oath
- Only ask the judge a question if you do not understand
- The judge may ask you questions first and then give me a turn to ask questions
  - Questions are usually about:
    - Your past jobs
    - Your work limitations due to your disabilities
    - What you do each day and the help you need from others
- DO NOT's...
  - Compare yourself to others
  - Try to play on the judge's sympathy
  - Take your anger out on the judge
  - Put on a show for the judge
- DO's...
  - Describe your symptoms and disabilities but do NOT exaggerate
  - Listen to questions asked so you can give the best answer
  - Know your abilities and limitations
  - Be an honest pessimist, tell the truth but focus on challenges
  - Provide details and specific examples, as shown below
- Additional information can be found at:
  - [mkhansenlaw.com](http://mkhansenlaw.com)
    - Resources Tab → Social Security → Category: Helpful Information to Know Once You File Your Claim → *Testifying at your disability hearing*

### **How to respond to a judge's question:**

*Example #1: (Bad)*

**Judge:** How far can you walk?

**Claimant:** Not far.

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*Example #2: (Good)*

**Judge:** How far can you walk?

**Claimant:** I can't walk more than 2 blocks without stopping to rest. Just yesterday, I went to the store which is about a block and a half from my house. By the time I got there my back felt like it had a hot spike driven into it. I only bought a loaf of bread. I could barely carry it home. I had to stop three times because my back hurt so much. When I got home I had to sit in my recliner to ease the pain.