

Kid Governor: A Voice for Oklahoma Kids

Katelyn Talley, age 11, becomes Kid Governor of Oklahoma.



Justice Noma Gurich gave Katelyn Talley her oath of office.

Adults in Oklahoma vote for a government leader called a governor. But children in that state get to vote for a *kid* governor too! In 2026, fifth graders elected eleven-year-old Katelyn Talley as their kid governor.

Katelyn is a fifth-grade student at Valliant Elementary School in Valliant, Oklahoma. She says her journey to become kid governor began quietly. “It all started out when I was bored, basically,” she told *News-O-Matic*. But what was once a way to fill time in her afternoons became an opportunity to make change and help animals in her state.

The Kid Governor program invites fifth graders to create a platform for change they want to see. Then, students across Oklahoma select one fifth grader from their school to nominate. Katelyn explained that she felt really good when she found out she was nominated. “I didn’t think I was going to make it, honestly,” she said.

After the nominations, students across Oklahoma voted to choose their 2026 kid governor. This year, 1,187 students participated in the program. At last, Katelyn and her classmates gathered outside on the sidewalk to hear the winner announced. Katelyn said, “I heard my name and I cried.”

The students of Oklahoma had selected Katelyn to carry out her platform to end animal abuse. She said her goal is to save a lot of abused and stray animals around the state. Katelyn has two cats named Raider and Moses, and she explained, “Me and a lot of my friends love animals to the death of us.”

Before she was elected, Katelyn created a plan to accomplish her goal. She shared the three steps to her plan with the fifth graders of Oklahoma.

The first part of Katelyn's plan is to make a day for fifth graders to visit animal shelters near them. This will allow the students to understand the animals better and provide an opportunity for them to help take care of the animals.

Next, Katelyn is encouraging students to send letters and drawings to the adult governor of Oklahoma. Right now, that official is Kevin Stitt. Katelyn hopes the messages from kids will convince the governor to take action to stop animal abuse. She said the letters can communicate, "Hey, this needs to be stopped. Can we make a law about it?"

Katelyn wants to teach students about animals at their schools too. The third part of her platform is making posters to put up in school hallways that can help students understand how to take care of animals.

Katelyn started her time as kid governor at an inauguration at the State Capitol in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on February 2. Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Noma Gurich delivered Katelyn's oath of office, and she met lawmakers Julia Kirt, Kyle Hilbert, and Eddy Dempsey. Katelyn said the event "felt like getting elected to be president, kind of." She added, "It felt like a big deal to me."

During her time as kid governor, Katelyn hopes to stop animal abuse in Oklahoma and convince kids not to hurt or be rude to animals. "It's like yelling at a friend," she explained.

Katelyn had one more thought for kids all over the world: "I am here to be a voice for them, and they can be a voice for animals too."

By Hannah Marcum

Updated March 9, 2026, 5:00 P.M. (ET)