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ELECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Herald endorsement: Florida Senate District 36 | Opinion

By the Miami Herald Editorial Board

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Republican Sen. Ileana Garcia and Democrat George Lavin are both running for Florida Senate District 36. *Provided*

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In Florida Senate District 36, voters have a choice between incumbent Republican Sen. Ileana Garcia — a priority for her last year was passing legislation to ban scientifically unproven “chemtrails” — and Democrat George Lavin.

Our choice is Lavin, the outspoken, Miami-born son of Cuban exile parents, who said he decided to run after becoming frustrated with the state and national political scene.



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“I’ve been pissed off since 2016, and every year it’s been getting worse,” he told the Board. “And I feel like if I didn’t step up and nobody else was going to step up, I needed to — to help fight the injustices that I’m seeing in our system.”

He ran unsuccessfully for West Miami’s city commission earlier this year. Until he filed for the District 36 seat, the incumbent had been unchallenged.

He lives in West Miami, but he said never sees Garcia, who is supposed to represent him in the Legislature. “I never see any town halls that she’s conducted. I never see her on TV. I never really hear her on the radio,” he said.



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Garcia, a co-founder of Latinas for Trump, did not meet with the Editorial Board. She won the seat in 2020 by fewer than 35 votes amid a “ghost candidate” scheme that led to criminal charges. She was reelected in 2022 by 18 percentage points after the Legislature’s a once-a-decade redistricting.

She filed a measure in 2024 that would have set aside \$5 million in taxpayer money to [help pay Trump's legal fees](#). She later withdrew the bill. She has been more effective on the issue of boating safety, passing legislation to set stiffer penalties for boating under the influence.

Lavin, 54, provides a fresh approach. He said, if elected, he would focus strongly on property insurance, an issue that the Legislature keeps talking about but failing to actually address beyond insurance litigation reforms in 2022. He also has his eye on the constitutional amendment going to voters this year to slash property taxes — “that is going to decimate lots of municipalities.”

Other issues he's focused on include the state's big-footing of local regulations (known as preemption) and the controversial Live Local law, which aims to fix Florida's housing shortage by giving builders fast-track administrative approval. He thinks the law needs to be revised to be more sensitive to local needs.

Overall, he said, “I just think we need to break the 27-year, one-party rule [of Republicans.] It's allowed them to cement themselves as a party that doesn't have to answer to anybody else.”

The district covers a center-east portion of Miami-Dade including West Miami, parts of Sweetwater, parts of Miami Beach and Miami and the unincorporated Fontainebleau and Westchester neighborhoods.

The Herald endorses **GEORGE LAVIN** for Senate District 36.

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