

# Lamar faces opponent — for first time

The state attorney will face Kissimmee attorney Mercedes Leon, a Republican, in November.

By SARAH LUNDY  
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For the first time, State Attorney Lawson Lamar has an opponent in the race to be the top prosecutor in the Ninth Circuit, which includes Orange and Osceola counties.

Kissimmee attorney Mercedes Leon has filed papers with the Division of Elections at the Florida Department of State. The election is scheduled for November.

Leon, 44, a Republican, was out of the country Monday and could not be reached for comment. She grew up in



LEON



LAMAR

Cuba and came to the United States in 1980. Leon taught herself English, partly by reading children's books and watching TV, she said in a 2001 interview with the *Orlando Sentinel*.

She graduated from Valencia Community College and the University of Tampa.

She was named one of three outstanding seniors at the University of Tampa and founded the Organization of Future Lawyers.

According to the Florida Bar, she

graduated from Stetson University College of Law in 1998 and was admitted to the Bar later that year.

She worked as an assistant Orange-Osceola public defender before going into the private sector. She lists her area of practice as criminal and family law.

In 2004, she ran unsuccessfully for Osceola County supervisor of elections, losing in the Republican primary.

Lamar, 65, who was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1972, was first elected state attorney in 1988. A Democrat, he was unopposed in that race and in the next four elections.

Before becoming state attorney, Lamar served as Orange County sheriff for eight years.

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