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LePage says he misspoke in calling for ‘authoritarian power’ in the U.S.

The governor criticizes media reports about his comments and says he meant to call for an 'authoritative' leader like Donald Trump in Tuesday's radio interview.

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Gov. Paul LePage said Wednesday that he misspoke when he said during a radio talk show that America needed Donald Trump to show “authoritarian power.”

What he meant to say in Tuesday’s comments on WVOM of Bangor was “authoritative,” LePage said during an impromptu 33-minute news conference in the governor’s Cabinet Room at the State House. LePage also reiterated his support of Trump and his disdain for the media, at one point suggesting that anybody who listened to what he said Tuesday would have known what he meant unless they were a “moron.”

LePage also said Wednesday that he was worried the U.S. government would collapse under a Hillary Clinton presidency, and he called President Obama a “dictator” who abused his executive authority.

“I think he has failed the American people, he has not worked with the Congress, and what he has done, he has used the executive office to put regulations on our country that is going to take us decades to get out of,” LePage said. “Donald Trump on the other hand is a very powerful personality and he has a very authoritative persona.

Gov. Paul LePage points to the Hillary Clinton piece of a set of nesting dolls during his State House news conference. The dolls, which he got as a gift in Russia, have images of ex-President Bill Clinton, right, and women he allegedly had affairs with.

“Let me explain what I mean by that. When he is in a room, people notice. He does not have to go behind closed doors with community activists to get things done and hurt American people, that’s really, what I really meant.”

Set before LePage’s lectern were what appeared to be Russian nesting dolls with the images of former President Bill Clinton and various women who Clinton has been accused of having affairs with, including former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, whom LePage also mentioned during the radio show Tuesday. The smallest doll of the set included an image of Hillary Clinton. LePage said he was given the dolls as a gift during a trip he made to Russia when he was mayor of Waterville in 2008.

LePage indicated the dolls represented how other countries viewed the U.S., and showed respect for the United States was in decline on the global stage – a theme Trump has sounded repeatedly as he campaigns for the White House.

LePage said Wednesday that he supports Trump because the U.S. is facing a \$20 trillion debt that will hurt the nation for decades to come. However, the governor reiterated that Trump was his third choice among Republican candidates. He has previously said he favored New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie first, and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush second.

When pressed about which Trump policies he liked best, LePage responded, “I don’t know enough about them, I am just campaigning.”

The governor then went on to attack an entire generation of Americans, paraphrasing a quote he said he had heard recently: “The children of the Greatest Generation have sold the grandchildren of the Greatest Generation down the tubes,” LePage said.

“I’m outspoken and I’m blunt, but I’ll tell you what, every single day of my life I get up and I work for the Maine people,” LePage said. He said his efforts, which led the conservative Cato Institute to recently rank him No. 1 among all governors for his economic policies, have been overlooked by Maine’s media outlets.

The Cato Institute ranking was reported in the state’s three largest daily newspapers, including the Portland Press Herald, and at least one Maine TV station.

“I am a lot of things, but I have not been 100 percent incorrect the last six years,” LePage said. “But according to your writings I’m about the biggest dumb-ass there is on the face of the earth, and coming from you all, it’s a compliment.”

LePage then began to leave the room, but when reporters asked if he would take any questions, he returned to the lectern, saying, “What kind of questions would you have of such an idiot?”

The comments that LePage sought to clarify were uttered Tuesday morning to the hosts of the WVOM talk show.

“Sometimes, I wonder that our Constitution is not only broken, but we need a Donald Trump to show some authoritarian power in our country and bring back the rule of law because we’ve had eight years of a president, he’s an autocrat, he just does it on his own, he ignores Congress, and every single day we’re slipping into anarchy,” he said to hosts Ric Tyler and George Hale.

LePage was evidently referring to Obama’s use of executive orders in areas such as immigration and environmental policy, which has prompted outrage among Republicans even though Obama has issued fewer executive orders per year than any president since the 1800s, according to the [American Presidency Project](#) at the University of California Santa Barbara.

Presidency project records indicate Obama had issued 252 executive orders as of Sept. 20, through 7½ years of his presidency, compared with 291 by George W. Bush in his two complete terms and 381 by Ronald Reagan during his two terms.

LePage's statement about "authoritarian power" generated intense criticism from Democrats and civil libertarians, who accused LePage of calling for an undemocratic form of government. LePage also was the subject of national media coverage, much of it critical.

Webster's New World College Dictionary defines an authoritarian as someone who advocates, practices or enforces unquestioning obedience to authority, as that of a dictator, rather than individual freedom of judgment and action. The same dictionary defines "authoritative" as someone or something having power, influence or the right to control and make decisions.

During the talk show interview, LePage also criticized Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, as well as former Republican Secretary of State Condeleezza Rice. Rice has called for Trump to leave the race for the White House, and Collins has said she will vote for neither Trump nor Clinton. The senator, who has high favorability ratings with the state's voters, also criticized Trump for lewd comments he made about women that were recorded in 2005 and released last week.

At Wednesday's news conference, LePage remained critical of Collins, saying those inside the Washington Beltway had been elected by "us peons," but they ultimately served themselves.

LePage has been dismissive of the "Access Hollywood" video of Trump discussing sexual aggression against women, saying, among other things, "And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. . . . Grab them by the p—y. You can do anything." On Wednesday, LePage repeated that the video was 11 years old, and he asked if there was anybody who hadn't made some mistake in 11 years.

Trump is expected to be in Bangor on Saturday and LePage said he would probably attend the rally, although he wasn't sure whether he had been invited by the Trump campaign yet.

By holding a news conference, LePage retreated from a vow he made Sept. 6 to speak only to the talk radio hosts and no other media. When asked by the Associated Press if he was now speaking with reporters again, LePage said he wasn't.

"I wouldn't speak to you, if you guys didn't make such a big deal about a missed word," he said. "I have no respect for you at all, make no bones about that. I think that you all live in a world of words and your life is to destroy people instead of doing the good things."

On Tuesday, the Press Herald asked LePage's communications staff shortly after the radio show if the governor was suggesting authoritarian rule for the United States. LePage's communications director, Peter Steele, said in an email that LePage was not. However, Steele also said neither the governor nor his staff would answer any additional questions about the radio show.