

IT'S ALL ABOUT \$\$\$

We know that the Administration only became intransigent about immunity for telecoms after a telecom lobbyist took over as Counselor to the President. And we know the telecoms cut off wiretaps—even a FISA one—when they didn't get paid by the FBI. It's pretty clear the fight over telecom immunity and FISA is about the money.

Which is probably why Republicans are now whining that telecoms are not paying them enough for their willingness to gut the Constitution.

In a reflection of the sensitivity of the subject matter, and an apparent recognition that they would undermine their own messaging by appearing to be motivated by fundraising concerns, Republicans on and off Capitol Hill declined to comment on the record.

But several confirmed the griping in GOP leadership ranks over the phone companies' shifting donations.

"When those numbers are made evident, it causes some angst," one Republican lobbyist said. "Leadership are told by staff, who look through this. There's communication back and forth" between GOP leadership and downtown.

"There's no question that from time to time staff, and maybe some Members, say to fellow travelers: 'Are you giving us some air cover? Are you helping us help you?'"

Added another K Street Republican:

"There's a growing frustration that a lot of these guys getting screwed by Democratic leadership are continuing to load their coffers."

Republican leaders, this lobbyist said, "sit there and scratch their heads and

say, 'We've always been very supportive of free markets and our opponents haven't, so why do they keep feeding the beast?'"

Shorter anonymous Republican aides: cough up for the immunity campaign. Now.

Can we start calling it a quid pro quo if this blatant demand to the telecoms works? And what's the going rate for gutting the Constitution, anyway?