

MIXED TELECOM SIGNALS

As Ryan Singel [points out](#), Silvestre Reyes went from writing a [scathing](#) editorial with Senators Leahy and Jello Jay and Congressman Conyers on Monday, denouncing Bush's scare tactics, to [announcing](#) imminent agreement by the end of the week.

Regarding a compromise deal, Reyes said: "We think we're very close, probably within the next week we'll be able to hopefully bring it to a vote."

Seemingly a pretty big turn-around over the course of the week, no?

But there's more that's funky with Reyes' timing. The AP reports his statement was taped Friday, not Sunday.

Rep. Silvestre Reyes, in a television interview broadcast Sunday, did not specifically say whether the House proposal would mirror the Senate's version.

[snip]

Reyes, whose interview was taped Friday, appeared on CNN's "Late Edition," as did Blunt.

Friday happens to be the same day that Harry Reid [moved](#) to pass a 30-day extension to the PAA.

As we move forward, there is no reason not to extend the Protect America Act to ensure that there are no gaps in our intelligence gathering capabilities. Even Admiral McConnell, the Director of national Intelligence, has testified that such an extension would be valuable. But the President threatens to

veto an extension, and our Republican colleagues continue, inexplicably, to oppose it.

"I urge them to withdraw their opposition. I will now ask unanimous consent to take up and pass S. 2664, a bill to extend the Protect America Act for 30 days, and to make the extension effective as of February 15, to ensure that there are no adverse legal consequences from the President's decision to let that law expire."

Now I suppose the 30-day extension, made retroactive to February 15, would amount to just a 15 day extension. And I see the value of forcing Republicans to repeatedly refuse to ensure the wiretaps continue.

But which is it? Imminent deal, or two more weeks?

And while we're talking about weird temporal anomalies, can someone help me with the timing of this passage?

Reyes, D-Texas, said he was open to that possibility after receiving documents from the Bush administration and speaking to the companies about the industry's role in the government spy program.

"We are talking to the representatives from the communications companies because if we're going to give them blanket immunity, we want to know and we want to understand what it is that we're giving immunity for," he said. "I have an open mind about that."

The word "after" suggests that Reyes has seen what the telecoms did, and now is more comfortable with the idea of immunity. Yet the phrase, "are talking" suggests this discussion is still in process. Is this just some kind of

AP grammar, or has Reyes already talked to the telecoms? Have [his colleagues from Commerce](#) gotten a chance to talk to the companies they oversee, or just a select group of Congressmen whose word we're being asked to trust? As McJoan [notes](#),

Bully for you, Congressman Reyes, for being able to talk to the telcos about their illegal activities. How about the rest of us? How about the American citizens who were spied on illegally and want to know why? Perhaps Congressman Reyes should consider calling those telco CEOs into a public hearing so that we could all learn about their role in the spying program before sealing that deal, before ensuring that those activities will never be examined by a court of law. And all due respect to the Congressman, his judgment on this matter shouldn't be substituted for that of a federal court.

If this is all much ado about nothing—as Reyes suggests—then let's hear it. Let's hear what assurances the telecoms had that their spying was legal after DOJ had rejected it in March 2004. Because a bunch of Republican lawyers sure thought it was illegal. Did Bush simply not tell them they were breaking the law? Because, if he did, then we surely have the right to know that, too.