

BYLINE: Bob Keeler

DATELINE: December 18, 2012

For many months, in the debate over raising taxes on higher-earning Americans, Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington) has been saying over and over that the threshold of wealth that has been bandied about, \$250,000, is grossly out of whack with reality on Long Island.

That dividing line simply needed to be higher, to reflect the Island's high cost of living, he argued. In fact, he pushed his case so often that in the Oval Office, where Israel had gained access because of his pivotal role in trying to elect more Democrats to the House, President Barack Obama has been known to greet him by saying: "Here comes Mr. \$250,000 Doesn't Make You Rich."

Now, as the fiscal you-know-what negotiations near some sort of fruition, the threshold number seems to be hovering around \$400,000 -- far more realistic for all of us in the metropolitan area.

We'll probably never know whether Israel's tireless repetition of his mantra had some impact on driving the final number northward. But he seems at the very least to have been remarkably prescient.