

‘Political rock star’ Clinton drops in on gay group’s gala in SoBe

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-- STEVE ROTH AUS

Former President Bill Clinton, in South Florida to campaign for Democratic candidates, made a surprise appearance Saturday night at the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's** 10th annual Recognition Dinner in South Beach.

Clinton arrived at the Loews Miami Beach Hotel about 8 p.m. and greeted NAACP Board Chairman Julian Bond, who received the evening's National Leadership award. Local honorees: philanthropist Bob Cole (The Miami Herald Humanitarian Award) and TWN (The Weekly News), South Florida's gay newspaper that closed in March after 29 years.

Clinton, 60, and Bond, 66, exchanged a few words, then the former president shook hands with dozens of the dinner's 600 attendees. He gave no speeches.

Soon, Secret Service agents whisked Clinton down a winding staircase and out of the hotel.

"President Clinton made a very nice gesture to stop in for 15 minutes on the way to the airport," said one-time *Amazing Race* winner Chip Arndt, now president of the Miami-Dade LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender) Democratic Caucus. "It's always encouraging when you have the proverbial rock stars, and President Clinton is a political rock star."