

GEORGE L. ATKINS

1976 - 1980

George Atkins was the mayor of his hometown of Hopkinsville when he ran for and won the office of state Auditor in 1975 at the age of 35. Atkins was a persistent critic of Governor Julian Carroll challenging his use of state-owned airplanes for personal use and repeatedly calling for inquiries into the spending practice of the administration.

The budget for the Auditor's office in 1970 was \$200,000. In 1977 it was \$760,000 and in 1979 (Atkins' last year in office) it was \$1.6 million. The August 1981 issue of "Kentucky Monthly" credited Atkins with "increasing the efficiency and clout of the office by issuing new guidelines, planning for computerization, and adding highly trained employees" during his administration.

A former University of Kentucky basketball player, Atkins ran for Governor in 1979, but decided to withdraw from the race to support John Y. Brown. Brown, upon being elected Governor, appointed Atkins to the powerful cabinet post of finance secretary and later cabinet secretary.

Atkins earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Kentucky in 1963. He attended the Yale School of Management, Executive Management Program, in 1986.

Atkins later joined Humana, Inc., at its corporate headquarters in Louisville as senior vice-president of public affairs and chief lobbyist. In that position he had responsibility for developing and managing legislative and public relations activities which affected the operation of the corporation at the federal and state levels. He served as a member of the board of governors of the Federation of American Health Systems and as chairperson of FedPac, a political action committee.

Humana fired Atkins in 1992 when a federal grand jury probe of corruption in state government led to Atkins' involvement in the 1990 Humana Bill. The bill would have allowed Jefferson County hospitals to expand without-state approval. (The bill was later declared unconstitutional). Atkins paid Senator Helen Garrett \$15,000 (supposedly for a five-page study of Humana's relationship with the

General Assembly). Senators Garrett and Patti Weaver switched to "yes" votes and ensured passage of the bill.

Early in 1993 Atkins joined The Hawthorn Group, a health-care consulting firm in Alexandria, Virginia.

On September 8, 1993, Atkins was indicted on charges of mail fraud for giving former state Senator Weaver \$10,000 in exchange for her vote on the 1990 bill. The man who had campaigned for state office as a government reformer and who had been described as a white knight of Kentucky politics in the 1970's pleaded guilty to the charges and cooperated with the FBI in its investigation. In exchange for his cooperation, Atkins would be given a probationary sentence. His old adversary, Julian Carroll, wished Atkins well and said that he was saddened by the indictment. "It was politics," Carroll said of the years of conflict between the two men.

On February 22, 1995, George Atkins was sentenced to five years' probation and fined \$10,000 for bribing a legislator while lobbying for Humana Inc. He could have been sent to federal prison for a year. Atkins was required to spend weekends in jail for six months and had to perform 400 hours of community service. Humana agreed to pay nearly \$100,000 to cover the cost of investigation leading up to the conviction.