Abstract: Why do politicians sometimes appoint bureaucratic leaders from outside of an agency

instead of from inside, even in positions where agency-specific expertise is expected to be important? I argue that politicians do not want to be tainted by their appointees’ misbehavior, and when they lack information on local bureaucrats, they appoint agency outsiders to minimize the risk of corruption between agency insiders and business clients. Using an original data of China’s provincial agency leaders, I find that provincial party secretaries are less likely to appoint agency leaders from inside when their in-province time is within 12 to 18 months, but only in agencies with high risk of corruption. Their cautiousness attenuates as their in-province time increases. I further show that this pattern is not driven by other political considerations. My study reveals how information affects the appointment strategy politicians use to solve the dilemma of bureaucratic delegation.