Abstract: How does increased monitoring change bureaucratic appointments? I argue that when politicians lack sufficient and credible information on the character of bureaucrats, increased monitoring forces politicians to prioritize minimizing risks over bureaucratic expertise. Using an original dataset of 1465 China’s provincial agency leaders, I find that after an unexpected anticorruption campaign, the proportion of agency leaders with inside-agency work experience drops significantly in agencies with higher risk of corruption, but not in agencies with lower risk of corruption. I interpret the results as provincial leaders’ cautiousness to reduce the higher risk of corruption associated with agency insiders, thus avoid being implicated by their appointees’ mistakes. I further demonstrate that appointing outsiders was not driven by seeking candidates with better abilities or higher political standards – two intended objectives of tightening up bureaucratic appointments. My findings qualify the effectiveness of relying on top-down accountability to regulate bureaucratic appointments in authoritarian regimes.