If you happen to be in Washington, D.C. between April 14 and April 26, you should take a walk to the National Mall to check out two presidential gems from our automotive past: President William Taft's 1909 White Steam Car, and President Ronald Reagan's 1962 Willys "Jeep."

The two cars were driven by noted motoring enthusiasts. Despite concern from Congress, Taft converted the White House stables into a four-car garage, and gave the White House its first car in 1909 . In the run-up to his presidency, Reagan secretly kept a Subaru BRAT – and even reported back to the Japanese automaker on the car's performance.

What is greatly apparent in this celebration of historic vehicles is the concept of consumer choice. In recent years, this concept has been eroded by the federal government, which has mandated ever-higher blends of ethanol into the gasoline supply. This is good news for a few narrow-interest groups in Washington D.C. as well as for Corn Belt farmers, but bad news for everyone else.

It's not only consumer choice that is being eroded. If an older car is filled with higher-ethanol gasoline, the ethanol can corrode through certain parts of the engine, such as fuel pumps and fuel lines. Needless to say, the results can be expensive to fix – and don't just take our word for it, classic car fan Jay Leno has a lot to say about ethanol too (and very little of it is complimentary).

For the latest cars, higher blends of ethanol are unlikely to be a liability. For vintage cars, however, greater quantities of the corrosive corn additive could mean the difference between driving your historic car and merely looking at it in your garage.

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