§ 2850-a. Emergency service volunteers; paid leave. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the contrary, public officers and employees of public authorities who are certified by the American Red Cross as disaster volunteers shall be granted leave from work with pay to participate in specialized disaster relief operations upon written request for such services by the American Red Cross and upon the approval of the chief executive of the public authority for which the public officer or employee serves. The public officer or employee shall be compensated at his or her regular rate of pay for those regular work hours during which the public officer or employee is absent from work while participating in authorized specialized disaster relief operations. Such leave shall be provided without loss of seniority, compensation, sick leave, vacation leave or other overtime compensation to which the volunteer is otherwise entitled and shall not exceed twenty days in any calendar year.